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Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/157.

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Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief submits the present report to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 62/157. In the report, she gives an overview of the activities carried out under the mandate since the submission of her previous report to the Assembly (A/62/280 and Corr.1), including her recent visits to Angola, India, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The Special Rapporteur addresses citizenship issues and religious discrimination in administrative procedures, a cross-cutting substantive topic of her mandate. After providing an overview of the pertinent State practice and domestic legislation, she examines the applicable international legal standards and case law. She notes that while most States do not openly discriminate on the basis of religion with respect to citizenship issues and in administrative procedures, there are instances where State practice or domestic legislation is inconsistent with human rights standards. In particular, she is concerned about the denial or deprivation of citizenship based on a person's religious affiliation; compulsory mentioning of selected religions on official identity cards or passports; requirements to denounce a particular faith when applying for official documents; and restricted eligibility for State functions for persons of certain faiths.

The Special Rapporteur presents conclusions and recommendations with regard to citizenship issues and administrative procedures in the context of her mandate. She emphasizes that the legitimate interests of the State have to be balanced on a case-by-case basis with the individual's freedom of religion or belief, also taking into account his or her right to privacy, liberty of movement, right to nationality and the principle of non-discrimination. She highlights some aspects that may help to determine whether certain restrictions on the right to freedom of religion or belief in the context of citizenship issues and administrative procedures are in contravention of human rights law.

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I. Introduction

1. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief was created by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1986/20.[1] In its resolution 6/37,[2] the Human Rights Council extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further period of three years and invited the Special Rapporteur:

(a) To promote the adoption of measures at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief;

(b) To identify existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and present recommendations on ways and means to overcome such obstacles;

(c) To continue her/his efforts to examine incidents and governmental actions that are incompatible with the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and to recommend remedial measures as appropriate;

(d) To continue to apply a gender perspective, inter alia, through the identification of gender-specific abuses, in the reporting process, including in information collection and recommendations.

2. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur gives an overview of the activities that have been carried out under the mandate since her previous report to the General Assembly (A/62/280 and Corr.1), discusses citizenship issues and religious discrimination in administrative procedures as a cross-cutting substantive topic of her mandate and sets out a number of conclusions and recommendations in this regard.

II. Activities of the mandate

3. In line with Human Rights Council resolution 6/37, the Special Rapporteur undertakes multiple activities, focusing on monitoring, communication, protection, prevention and analysis, so that pertinent recommendations can be made for the consideration of the Council and other United Nations bodies. The Special Rapporteur receives a vast amount of information concerning her mandate. She communicates reliable information emanating from credible sources to the Government of the concerned State. Country visits are undertaken for a variety of reasons, including in search of solutions to the complex issues of freedom of religion or belief. During field visits and other activities related to the mandate, the Special Rapporteur seeks to engage in a dialogue with Governments in the light of the observations, conclusions and recommendations she presents in the course of her work. She shares her analysis with the Government concerned and documents this in her reports. As part of her preventive efforts, the Special Rapporteur has been involved in various forms of inter-religious dialogue and in brainstorming on issues arising out of her mandate. She remained abreast of efforts to develop educational

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1986, Supplement No. 2* (E/1986/22), chap. II, sect. A.

[2] See A/HRC/6/22, chap. I.

approaches that promote tolerance towards individuals and groups of diverse religions and beliefs. The mandate also involves an early-warning function in order to identify emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

A. Communications

4. Since the beginning of the mandate in 1986, the Special Rapporteur has sent a total of 1,130 communications to 130 countries. The majority of communications have been sent as letters of allegation to the permanent mission of the State concerned. The Special Rapporteur resorts to urgent appeals in cases where the alleged violations are time sensitive in terms of potential loss of life, life-threatening situations, or either imminent or ongoing damage of a very grave nature to victims that cannot be addressed in a timely manner by a letter of allegation.

5. The individual cases transmitted to Governments and replies received are summarized in annual reports to the Council (see A/HRC/7/10/Add.1). These reports use the framework for communications (E/CN.4/2006/5, annex) which enables the Special Rapporteur to determine which elements of the mandate, if any, are raised by the allegations received. She has also developed this framework for communications into an online digest, which illustrates the international standards according to the various categories with pertinent excerpts of the mandate-holders' findings since 1986. The online digest is available on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (www.ohchr.org).

6. The communications give only a general picture. The Special Rapporteur receives many more allegations than are finally transmitted to Governments. There may be still further allegations that have not been brought to the attention of the Special Rapporteur. Consequently, the "communications report" is only an indication of the forms of violation of freedom of religion or belief. In the past, the Special Rapporteur has received reports that people had been murdered, arrested or discriminated against on the basis of their religion or belief. Certain groups tend to be particularly vulnerable with regard to their freedom of religion or belief; consequently, the Special Rapporteur has paid specific attention to the situation of women, minorities, persons deprived of their liberty, refugees, children and migrant workers.

7. Since many cases raise concern with regard to a number of human rights violations, the Special Rapporteur again acted jointly with other special procedures mandate holders. Since 1 July 2007, joint letters of allegation or joint urgent appeals have been sent with the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; the independent expert on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the

situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

B. Country visits

8. In the past 14 years, the mandate holders have conducted 27 visits to analyse the situation of 26 countries on all continents. Since her previous report, she has visited Angola (in November 2007), Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (in January 2008) and India (in March 2008). The visit to India was the first follow-up visit of the mandate, since her predecessor conducted a mission to India in 1996. The Special Rapporteur would like to emphasize that during her missions, she experienced a very satisfactory level of cooperation from the Governments concerned and there was always a genuine dialogue aimed at strengthening the States' capacity to comply with their human rights obligations.

1. Visit to Angola

9. The Special Rapporteur visited Angola from 20 to 27 November 2007. While the right to freedom of religion or belief is enshrined in the 1992 Constitution, the Special Rapporteur noted concerns regarding Law No. 2/04 on freedom of religion, conscience and worship, which contains stringent requirements for registration, for example membership of 100,000 persons who are domiciled in Angola, from two thirds of the total of the Angolan provinces. This law discriminates against religious minorities and is not in conformity with the international standards to which Angola is a party. The Special Rapporteur recommended that the law should be reformed and was encouraged by the openness of the Government towards reviewing the provisions of the law.

10. The Special Rapporteur regretted that Angola was also affected by a dominant global trend of associating Muslims with international terrorism. She emphasized the Government's obligation to promote tolerance and to prevent any official from making statements to the detriment of any religious community. With regard to one detention centre that she visited, she expressed regret that, although 95 per cent of the 165 detainees were Muslims, they had no access to an imam or religious books.

11. Concerning the situation in Cabinda, the Special Rapporteur received a significant number of reports of violence, intimidation and harassment and arrests by State agents of individuals perceived to dispute the appointment of the Catholic bishop of Cabinda. She was also concerned at the violence and threats against the leadership of the Angolan Catholic Church, and urged that intra-religious dialogue between the opposing factions be facilitated.

12. The Special Rapporteur also expressed concern at the abuse and violence against children who were accused by their families of witchcraft. She was encouraged by the leadership assumed by the National Children's Institute, together with UNICEF, to address this problem; however, the response to the various problems has been isolated and fragmented. Finally, the Special Rapporteur recommended that the Government of Angola sign a memorandum of understanding with OHCHR with a view to establishing an office with a full mandate to promote and protect all human rights. She regrets that, in March 2008, the Government decided not to sign a comprehensive agreement for human rights promotion and

protection activities in Angola and that it requested OHCHR to cease all activities and close its representation in the country by 31 May 2008.

2. Visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

13. The Special Rapporteur carried out a mission to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory from 20 to 27 January 2008. While recalling that the land she visited was blessed with a rich diversity and important sites holy to many religions, the Special Rapporteur regretted that this very diversity had polarized people along religious lines; indeed, the conflict was having an adverse impact on the right of individuals and communities to worship freely and to attend religious services at their respective holy places. Many Muslims and Christians were impeded from worshipping at some of their most holy places in the world because of an elaborate system of permits, visas and checkpoints and by the barrier. The Government of Israel informed the Special Rapporteur that those restrictions were necessary for security reasons. She would nevertheless like to emphasize that any measure taken to combat terrorism must comply with the State's obligations under international law, including freedom of religion or belief, and that they should be non-discriminatory and proportionate to their aim.

14. While acknowledging that members of religious minorities in Israel asserted that there was no religious persecution by the State, the Special Rapporteur noted that groups within the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths had experienced different forms of discrimination, such as the neglect of Christian and Muslim holy sites or the unfair allocation of subsidies at the expense of religious minorities and groups.

15. Minority communities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including some small Christian groups, expressed their fear of a rising level of religious intolerance. Women seemed to bear the brunt of religious zeal. The Special Rapporteur was informed about cases of honour killings carried out with impunity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the name of religion, and some women in Gaza reportedly recently felt coerced into covering their heads not out of religious conviction but out of fear.

16. A major challenge that needs to be addressed immediately in order to avoid deterioration of the situation is to effectively prohibit and sanction incitement to religious hatred. Any violence committed in the name of religion should be denounced, investigated and sanctioned. It is particularly worrying when children are being incited to express hatred towards those with a different religious affiliation. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur recommended that all parties to a possible peace agreement bind themselves legally to protect the rights of religious minorities and include guarantees for equality and non-discrimination based on religion as well as for the preservation of and peaceful access to holy sites.

3. Visit to India

17. The Special Rapporteur visited India from 3 to 20 March 2008 as a follow-up to her predecessor's mission (see E/CN.4/1997/91/Add.1). She commended the central Government for its comprehensive policy pertaining to minorities, including religious ones, and she welcomed the recent reports drafted by the committees headed by Justice Rajender Sachar and Justice Renganath Misra. She also commended the National Commission for Minorities for taking prompt action and issuing independent reports on incidents of communal violence, with concrete

recommendations. However, she regretted that the performance of various state human rights commissions was uneven, as it depended very much on their composition and the importance the different Governments attached to their mandates.

18. The Special Rapporteur stressed that, even though India had a comprehensive legal framework to protect minority and religious rights, its implementation was proving difficult. She deplored the fact that law enforcement officials were often reluctant to take any action against organized groups that perpetrated violence in the name of religion or belief.

19. During her visit, she received numerous reports of attacks on religious minorities and their places of worship as well as of discrimination against disempowered sections of the Hindu community. In Uttar Pradesh, the Special Rapporteur received concrete reports of violence and rape as a reaction to intermarriages between members of different religions or castes. She also reported widespread violence in the Kandhamal district of Orissa, targeting primarily Christians in dalit and tribal communities. In Gujarat, more than 1,000 people were massacred in 2002[3] and there are credible reports of inaction by the authorities and alleged complicity by the state Government in those attacks. The Special Rapporteur also deplored the increasing ghettoization and isolation of Muslims in many areas of the country and expressed concern at the extended time frame of investigations in cases involving past communal riots, violence and massacres.

20. She recalled that in her predecessor's report (ibid., para. 46), he expressed the fear that something in the nature of the 1992 Ayodhya incident would recur in the event of political exploitation of a situation. She emphasized that there is today a real risk that similar communal violence might happen again unless incitement to religious hatred and political exploitation of communal tensions are effectively prevented. Other issues of concern to the Special Rapporteur's mandate include the legal link between scheduled caste status and religious affiliation, the impact of "anti-conversion laws" in several states, as well as the concerns voiced by Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and atheists.

C. Other activities

21. The Special Rapporteur issued press releases jointly with other special procedures mandate holders, expressing their concern at recent events and at the human rights situation in Myanmar (28 September 2007), Kenya (4 January 2008) and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China (10 April 2008). In another joint statement with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Special Rapporteur for the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, she condemned the distorted vision of Muslims in the online film "Fitna" and called for dialogue and vigilance (28 March 2008).

22. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur participated in the fifteenth annual meeting of special procedures mandate holders and in several conferences or meetings pertinent to her mandate. For example, the Special Rapporteur addressed

[3] Some sources estimate that more than 2,000 people were killed during the communal violence in Gujarat in 2002.

the plenary of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, in the framework of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. She encourages inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue in various forms and on different levels. In order to advance a culture of peace through dialogue and cooperation between individuals and communities of diverse religions and beliefs, the Special Rapporteur also supports the proposal for a United Nations decade of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation for peace.

23. With regard to prevention activities, the Special Rapporteur has been involved in efforts by the Advisory Council of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to develop the Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools.[4] This document is designed to offer practical guidance for preparing curricula for teaching about religions and beliefs, preferred procedures for assuring fairness in the development of curricula and standards for their implementation. The Special Rapporteur would like to reiterate that education can play an important preventive role, especially when it fosters respect for and acceptance of pluralism and diversity. Since the quality of education and learning materials is crucial, States should take appropriate measures to bring their school curricula, textbooks and teaching methods into line with human rights provisions, including freedom of religion or belief. Her predecessor had initiated the 2001 International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation to Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-discrimination, at which the Madrid Final Document was adopted (E/CN.4/2002/73, appendix).

24. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the start of the universal periodic review, which will examine the human rights records of all States Members of the United Nations through a common mechanism every four years. She notes with appreciation that, for the first two sessions in April and May 2008, many of the Special Rapporteur's observations and recommendations were included by OHCHR in the reports compiling information contained in United Nations documents. Issues of freedom of religion or belief also featured in several interactive dialogues and reports of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. This provides a good opportunity to follow up, inter alia, on communications and country visits of the Special Rapporteur. She therefore also intends to re-establish the mandate's initial approach (see A/51/542, annexes I and II; A/52/477/Add.1; A/53/279, annex; and E/CN.4/1999/58, annex) to send follow-up letters after country visits in order to receive updated information about the implementation of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations at the national level.

III. Citizenship issues and religious discrimination in administrative procedures

25. In various communications and reports, the Special Rapporteur has expressed concern with regard to citizenship issues and religious discrimination in administrative procedures. In this section, she gives an overview of State practice and domestic legislation concerning this issue, examines the applicable international legal standards as well as relevant international and regional case law and provides

[4] Available online at www.osce.org/odihr/item_11_28314.html.

her conclusions and recommendations so that the rights and limitations in this area may be adequately balanced.

26. The present report will deal with citizenship issues and religious discrimination in administrative procedures in the context of freedom of religion or belief. With regard to the historical and political context of minorities and the discriminatory denial or deprivation of citizenship, the Special Rapporteur would like to refer to the latest report submitted by the independent expert on minority issues (A/HRC/7/23 and Add.1-3). In that report, the independent expert also outlines international law considerations, such as the right to a nationality,[5] the centrality of non-discrimination, citizenship, and the enjoyment of human rights, fundamental freedoms and minority rights. The independent expert emphasized that, with limited exceptions, States have a duty to protect and promote the complete panoply of human rights of all persons who are present within their territory, whether they are citizens or not.

A. State practice and domestic legislation

27. Most States do not openly discriminate on the basis of religion in citizenship applications or other administrative procedures. However, the Special Rapporteur has reported on a number of instances in which State practice or domestic legislation is inconsistent with human rights standards. These reports refer for example to the denial or deprivation of citizenship based on a person's religious affiliation, compulsory mentioning of selected religions on official identity cards or passports, requirements to denounce a particular faith when applying for official documents and restricted eligibility for State functions.

1. Citizenship dependent on affiliation with a particular religion

28. During her visit to the Maldives in August 2006, the Special Rapporteur was informed that, according to section 2 (a) of the Maldivian Citizenship Act, it was not possible for non-Muslims to obtain Maldivian citizenship. A number of interlocutors also indicated that applicants for Maldivian citizenship had to pass a test on Islam; however, the Government stated that this was not a legal requirement. A draft bill to replace the Citizenship Act with even more stringent criteria for Muslims was redrawn by the Government after debates in Parliament (A/HRC/4/21/Add.3, para. 45).

29. There are States, such as Saudi Arabia[6] and Kuwait,[7] where only Muslims obtain citizenship. In response to a letter from the Government of Saudi Arabia, the first mandate holder, Angelo Vidal d'Almeida Ribeiro, made the following observations:

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[5] As in the report of the independent expert (A/HRC/7/23, para. 18), the terms "nationality" and "citizenship" are used as synonyms for the purposes of the present report.

[6] CRC/C/136/Add.1, para. 98 (second periodic report of Saudi Arabia to the Committee on the Rights of the Child): "Although all Saudi citizens are Muslims, the State nevertheless respects the right of non-Muslim residents to their religious beliefs."

[7] E/CN.4/1998/6, para. 58: "(c) In Kuwait, according to allegations from several sources, citizenship is denied to non-Muslims."

"... as concerns the reply of the Government of Saudi Arabia according to which '100 per cent of all the citizens of Saudi Arabia are adherents of the Muslim religion', he would like to indicate that such uniformity does not exist in either political or religious matters. Mankind has a right to diversity, to the freedom of thought, conscience and belief, without limits being imposed on anyone, except in cases where restrictions to their exercise are prescribed" (E/CN.4/1993/62, para. 53).

30. Some believers are not only prevented from becoming citizens based on religious affiliation, but they may also lose their citizenship if they decide to change their religion. The Special Rapporteur has been informed of such a deprivation of citizenship following a conversion from the dominant religion to another religion.[8]

2. Access to and contents of official documents

31. Some States deny official documents, including identity cards, passports, birth certificates and marriage licences, to members of certain religious communities or only issue these documents to members of a particular religious group.[9] Administrative obstacles with regard to applications for these documents, including requesting members of a particular group applying for identity cards to supply additional documents, may also restrict the rights of the individuals concerned. Converts to a different religion sometimes encounter problems when they request that official documents reflect the change of their religious affiliation.

32. Several States require that religious affiliation be specified on identity cards, passports and/or the application forms for either.[10] In some cases there is a choice between only two[11] or three[12] officially recognized religions, without the option to refrain from indicating one's religion or to declare that one is an atheist or non-theist. Computerized systems may aggravate the problem when they are programmed in a manner so as to prevent any religious affiliation other than those preselected by the State from being entered.

33. When applying for official documents, some groups have to subscribe to specific statements with regard to their substantive religious beliefs. In Pakistan, Muslims are required to solemnly declare in their passport application form that they "do not recognize any person who claims to be a prophet in any sense of the

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[8] E/CN.4/2000/65, para. 64 (on the Maldives).

[9] A/HRC/7/10/Add.1, paras. 79-85 (on Egypt); A/HRC/4/21/Add.3 (on the Maldives), para. 45.

[10] E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.2 (on the Islamic Republic of Iran), para. 62; E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.1 (on Pakistan), paras. 22 and 23.

[11] A/HRC/8/18, para. 31 (on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem): "The West Bank and Gaza identity cards indicate whether the cardholder is Muslim or Christian, with no possible alternatives. The identity cards of those who are not believers, for example, indicate that they have the same religion as their parents; in contrast, cards of Jerusalem residents and Israeli citizens do not contain information about religion."

[12] E/CN.4/2004/63, paras. 40 and 41; E/CN.4/2005/61/Add.1, para. 85; E/CN.4/2006/5/Add.1, para. 117; A/HRC/7/10/Add.1, paras. 79-85 (on Egypt). However, in two judgements dated 29 January 2008 (No. 18354/58 and No. 12780/61) the Cairo Court of Administrative Justice annulled decisions of the administration which had abstained from putting a dash or another symbol in the space reserved for religion on the applicants' identity cards or birth certificates after ascertaining that they previously had been issued official documents that do not indicate one of the three recognized religions in Egypt (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). See also A/HRC/7/23, para. 53.

word or any description whatsoever after Muhammad (peace be upon him) or recognize such claimant as prophet or a religious reformer as a Muslim" and that they "consider Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Quadiani to be an imposter Nabi and also consider his followers whether belonging to the Lahori or Quadiani Group to be Non-Muslim".[13]

34. Denying official documents or creating obstacles in the application process for members of particular religious groups may have serious consequences for their civil and political rights as well as for their economic, social and cultural rights. Those who have no valid identity papers are often unable to vote and thus are excluded politically. Other consequences include difficulties in obtaining employment in the public sector,[14] opening bank accounts, establishing businesses and getting access to health care or continuing higher education.[15] Random checks performed by the police may result in detention for those without identity papers. Furthermore, restrictions in the issuance of passports or visas based on religious affiliation can restrict the movement of the individuals concerned.[16]

35. Immigration issues are sometimes referred to by States as a reason to limit the right to obtain official documents or to impose stricter requirements for some groups. Usually State measures in this area are not specifically directed against particular religious groups, but against people with certain regional or ethnic backgrounds. However, where the majority of these persons belong to a certain religious group, the Government actions may de facto target that group disproportionately.

36. Specifying religion or ethnic origin on identity cards and the establishment of different categories of citizenship may result in discrimination, stigmatization or the denial of certain rights.[17] Some religious groups are granted preferential treatment, receiving automatic citizenship and financial benefits from the Government, whereas people who do not belong to that religious group are denied this treatment.[18] Another State practice is requiring citizens to mention their religious affiliation on tax forms for the purpose of levying church taxes for some churches in that country.[19]

3. Restrictions on certain rights of members of particular religious groups

37. Some Governments restrict the rights of members of particular religious groups in administrative procedures. For instance, registry offices refuse to register marriages of persons not belonging to one of the recognized religions, or inter-

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[13] The passport application form is available on the website of the Government of Pakistan: http://pakistan.gov.pk/forms/pdf/form_c_d.i.p._3(rev).pdf.zip; see also the Special Rapporteur's report on her visit to Pakistan (E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.1, para. 24).

[14] E/CN.4/2005/61/Add.1, para. 173 (on Myanmar), A/HRC/4/21/Add.3 (on the Maldives), paras. 43 and 44.

[15] A/HRC/7/10/Add.1, paras. 81-83 (on Egypt).

[16] E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.2 (on the Islamic Republic of Iran), para. 107; E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.1 (on Pakistan), paras. 23, 78 and 85.

[17] Committee on the Rights of the Child, concluding observations: Myanmar (CRC/C/15/Add.237), para. 34.

[18] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, concluding observations: Israel (E/C.12/1/Add.90), para. 18; similar concerns were raised by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD/C/ISR/CO/13, para. 17).

[19] E/CN.4/1998/6/Add.2 (on Germany), paras. 11 and 18.

religious marriages;[20] divorces between people belonging to a particular religious group are not recognized and their right of succession is not respected;[21] immigration and residence rights as well as other privileges such as access to land and benefits for immigrants are only provided to members of a certain religious community.[22] Some registration provisions require that the leaders of religious associations must be citizens, which may adversely affect religious minority groups if exclusively foreign clergy serve in that particular country.[23] Also, persons who wish to change their name because their religion requires it may find their request denied.[24] Another issue is the discrimination women face in the application of religious laws, in particular in areas such as divorce, inheritance, custody of children, transmission of citizenship[25] and freedom of movement.[26]

38. Some countries place an obligation upon those who wish to take up posts in the public service or become part of the judiciary to take an oath declaring their allegiance to a certain religion. Several constitutional provisions require the president,[27] the prime minister[28] and members of parliament[29] to be affiliated with a certain religion and to publicly so state by taking an oath. In other countries the king or queen,[30] the highest offices in the judiciary such as the attorney-general and the chief justice and members of the national human rights commission[31] have to take such an oath. Restricting public posts to members of certain religions also occurs and may constitute de facto discrimination.[32] Sometimes candidates for a post in the public service have to be members of a particular denomination of the dominant religion in that State.[33]

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[20] E/CN.4/1995/91, p. 49 and E/CN.4/2005/61/Add.1, para. 132 (on Indonesia). See also E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.2 (on the Islamic Republic of Iran, where Baha'i marriages are not recognized), para. 62.

[21] E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.2 (on the Islamic Republic of Iran), para. 62.

[22] Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, concluding observations: Israel (CERD/C/ISR/CO/13), para. 17.

[23] A/HRC/7/10/Add.2 (on Tajikistan), para. 37 and A/HRC/7/10/Add.1, para. 246 (on the draft law of Tajikistan).

[24] *Coeriel et al. v. The Netherlands* (CCPR/C/48/D/453/1991), para. 6.1.

[25] E/CN.4/2000/65, para. 19 (on Brunei Darussalam); E/CN.4/2002/73/Add.2 (French only), para. 137 (citing reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Algeria, Jordan and Kuwait).

[26] A/54/386, para. 83 (on Yemen).

[27] A/51/542/Add.1 (on Greece), paras. 15-17; E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.1 (on Pakistan), para. 17.

[28] E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.1 (on Pakistan), para. 17.

[29] A/HRC/4/21/Add.3 (on the Maldives), para. 10; see also article 62 of the Constitution of Pakistan: "A person shall not be qualified to be elected or chosen as a member of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) unless ... (d) he is of good character and is not commonly known as one who violates Islamic Injunctions; (e) he has adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings and practises obligatory duties prescribed by Islam as well as abstains from major sins; ... Provided that the disqualifications specified in paragraphs (d) and (e) shall not apply to a person who is a non-Muslim, but such a person shall have good moral reputation ...".

[30] A/HRC/7/10/Add.3 (on the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), para. 30.

[31] A/HRC/4/21/Add.3 (on the Maldives), paras. 43 and 44.

[32] A/55/280/Add.2 (on Bangladesh), para. 96.

[33] A/HRC/4/21/Add.3 (on the Maldives), para. 43. Articles 34 (a) and 66 (a) of the 1997 Constitution of the Maldives requires the President, the Cabinet ministers and the Attorney-General to be "a Muslim of Sunni following"; however, all Muslims are qualified to become a member of the People's Majlis, to be appointed as an atoll chief, chief justice or judge as well as to be a voter in elections and public referendums.

B. International legal standards

1. Citizenship dependent on affiliation with a particular religion

39. The State determines the criteria on the basis of which citizenship is accorded. However, it may not do this in a discriminatory manner, such as making a distinction on the basis of religion or belief. From the perspective of human rights law it seems impossible to justify the denial of citizenship to applicants who are not members of the majority religion in a given State. Consequently, in her country reports, the Special Rapporteur has encouraged legislators to consider introducing amendments to the citizenship law to bring it into compliance with treaty obligations, particularly with regard to non-discrimination provisions.[34]

40. The principle of non-discrimination can be found in various international and regional human rights instruments. Article 2 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, as do article 2 (2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 5 (d) (7) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, article 14 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) and article 1 of the American Convention on Human Rights. The 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief calls on all States to "take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life" (art. 4 (1)).

41. One example of a discriminatory action with regard to citizenship on the basis of religion or belief could be where an individual's application to obtain citizenship is denied because the applicant, or his or her spouse, wears a religious symbol. The Swiss Federal Tribunal recently adjudicated that wearing a headscarf is a manifestation of the constitutionally protected right to freedom of religion or belief which should be interpreted in the light of the prohibition of discrimination. The Tribunal found that the mere wearing of a headscarf does not indicate a lack of respect for the constitutional order and consequently the decision not to grant citizenship to the woman in question violated the principle of equality.[35] In France, however, the citizenship application of a Salafi Muslim woman from Morocco who wears a black burka and reportedly lives in total submission to her male relatives was rejected in 2005 on the grounds of insufficient assimilation. The French Council of State recently upheld the rejection, arguing that the women's adoption of a "radical practice of her religion [was] incompatible with the essential values of the French community, in particular the principle of equality of the sexes".[36]

42. Migrants seem to be in a particularly vulnerable position, inter alia, with regard to their freedom of religion or belief. Immigration policies and citizenship tests must not discriminate on the basis of the applicant's religious background. In this regard concerns about the contents of questionnaires and interview guidelines

[34] A/HRC/4/21/Add.3 (on the Maldives), para. 67.

[35] Tribunal Fédéral Suisse, judgements 1D_11/2007 and 1D_12/2007 of 27 February 2008 (German only).

[36] Conseil d'État, decision No. 286798 of 27 June 2008 (French only).

used by domestic naturalization authorities were expressed in an urgent appeal sent jointly by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.[37]

43. Furthermore, the right to a nationality is enshrined, inter alia, in article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 20 of the American Convention on Human Rights. Article 24 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantee the right to every child to acquire a nationality. Article 7 of the latter should be read in conjunction with its article 2, one of the Convention's general principles, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of, inter alia, religion or belief. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness equally recognizes the right to a nationality and its article 9 provides that a "Contracting State may not deprive any person or group of persons of their nationality on racial, ethnic, religious or political grounds". The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons also stipulates that the provisions of the Convention shall apply without discrimination as to religion (art. 2).

44. In its resolution 41/70 on international cooperation to avert new flows of refugees, the General Assembly called upon all States to comply with the recommendations of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts to Avert New Flows of Refugees (A/41/324, annex) and, in particular, the recommendation to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms and to refrain from denying them on the basis of, inter alia, religion (ibid., para. 66 (d)). Furthermore, reference should also be made to Human Rights Council resolution 7/10,[38] in which the Council called upon States to refrain from taking discriminatory measures and from enacting or maintaining legislation that would arbitrarily deprive persons of their nationality. The Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights decided in 2000 to appoint a special rapporteur on the rights of non-citizens. In his final report, the Special Rapporteur, David Weissbrodt, concluded that all persons should by virtue of their essential humanity enjoy all human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, unless exceptional distinctions, for example, between citizens and non-citizens, serve a legitimate State objective and are proportional to the achievement of that objective.[39]

2. Access to and contents of official documents

45. Denying official documents to members of certain religions or limiting the right to receive these documents to members of particular religious groups is in contravention of the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, as mentioned above. With regard to the compulsory mentioning of selected religions on official documents, the Special Rapporteur has emphasized that "to exclude any mention of religions other than Islam, Christianity or Judaism would appear to be a violation of international law".[40] Even the optional reference to a

[37] A/HRC/4/21/Add.1, paras. 152-158 (on Germany).

[38] See draft report of the Human Rights Council on its seventh session (A/HRC/7/L.11), chap. I, sect. A.

[39] E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/23, para. 1.

[40] E/CN.4/2004/63, para. 42 (on Egypt). See also the most recent communications report of the Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/7/10/Add.1), paras. 79-85.

person's religion on identity papers "could still pose a problem to the extent that social pressures might make it difficult to omit mention of one's religion or beliefs".[41]

46. The freedom to have and adopt a religion or belief is enshrined in several international and regional legal standards. This right also includes a negative freedom not to belong to any religious group or to live without religious confession.[42] In paragraph 3 of its general comment No. 22 (1993),[43] the Human Rights Committee underlined that no one can be compelled to reveal his thoughts or adherence to a religion or belief. In view of the negative freedom of religion or belief, this necessarily also includes the right not to be compelled to reveal one's non-adherence to a particular religion or belief.

47. The Special Rapporteur has emphasized both the positive and the negative freedom of religion or belief in the context of religious symbols.[44] This differentiation is also relevant with regard to the obligation to state one's religion or belief on official documents. Whereas some may wish to declare their religion and thus exercise their positive freedom of religion or belief, others may rightly wish not to do so, which would amount to the exercise of their negative freedom of religion or belief.

48. Moreover, article 18 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibits the State from exercising coercion to belong or not to belong to a certain religious group. The Human Rights Committee has interpreted this provision as follows:

> "Article 18.2 bars coercion that would impair the right to have or adopt a religion or belief, including the use or threat of physical force or penal sanctions to compel believers or non-believers to adhere to their religious beliefs and congregations, to recant their religion or belief or to convert. Policies or practices having the same intention or effect, such as, for example, those restricting access to education, medical care, employment or the rights guaranteed by article 25 and other provisions of the Covenant, are similarly inconsistent with article 18.2. The same protection is enjoyed by holders of all beliefs of a non-religious nature."[45]

49. The imposition by the State of a duty on individuals to publicly state their allegiance to a certain religion on official documents may also constitute a limitation of their right to manifest their religion or belief. In cases where the application procedure for such official documents only allows the applicant to select from a limited number of religions, those applicants whose religion is not included in the list may not be able to manifest their religion by having their allegiance to it made public. In addition, there is equally a right not to manifest one's religion, which would also be limited through the requirement to mention one's religion on an official document.

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[41] A/55/280/Add.1 (on Turkey), para. 22.

[42] Manfred Nowak, *UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. CCPR Commentary* (2nd ed.), Kehl am Rhein, N. P. Engel Verlag, 2005, art. 18, para. 15.

[43] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/48/40), vol. I, annex VI.

[44] E/CN.4/2006/5, paras. 36-60.

[45] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/48/40), vol. I, annex VI, para. 5.

50. Contrary to the right to have or adopt a religion (*forum internum*), the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief (*forum externum*) may be subject to limitations, for example, according to article 29 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 18 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 1 (3) of the 1981 Declaration, article 9 (2) of the European Convention on Human Rights and article 12 (3) of the American Convention on Human Rights. However, these clauses only accept such limitations as are prescribed or determined by law and are necessary, in a democratic society, to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

51. The right to freedom of religion or belief is also included in the concept of identity, which is an integral part of the right to privacy, as enshrined in article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.[46] According to article 17 (1) of the Covenant, no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation. The Human Rights Committee elaborated in its general comment No. 16 (1988) that

> "the expression 'arbitrary interference' can also extend to interference provided for under the law. The introduction of the concept of arbitrariness is intended to guarantee that even interference provided for by law should be in accordance with the provisions, aims and objectives of the Covenant and should be, in any event, reasonable in the particular circumstances. ... As all persons live in society, the protection of privacy is necessarily relative. However, the competent public authorities should only be able to call for such information relating to an individual's private life the knowledge of which is essential in the interests of society as understood under the Covenant."[47]

52. With regard to the mentioning of religion on identity cards, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in its concluding observations, in the light of article 7 of the Convention (right to name and nationality), that the State party concerned should "abolish the categories of citizens, as well as the statement on the national identity card of the religion and ethnic origin of citizens, including children".[48]

53. The privacy aspect also becomes important in those situations where the State asks taxpayers to mention their religion on the tax form, for the purpose of levying taxes for certain major churches. Under certain circumstances this practice could be perceived as according benefits to certain religions in a discriminatory manner.[49] The State should take appropriate steps to guarantee that the information provided on the tax forms is not used for any purposes other than within the framework of the levying of taxes.

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[46] Nowak, op. cit., art. 17, para. 18.

[47] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/43/40), annex VI, paras. 4 and 7.

[48] Committee on the Rights of the Child, concluding observations: Myanmar (CRC/C/15/Add.237), para. 35.

[49] See E/CN.4/1998/6/Add.2 (on Germany), paras. 11 and 18, where the Special Rapporteur also explains that in the context of Germany these advantages are not related to the religious character of the church, but to recognition of the fact that it is in the public interest, or regarded as compensation for assets which had been confiscated without payment.

54. Furthermore, article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees the right to freedom of movement, which encompasses the right to leave any country, including one's own. This right also includes a right to issuance of travel documents, as a positive duty upon States to ensure the effective guarantee of the right to leave a country.[50] The Human Rights Committee has emphasized that where a State denies the issuance of a passport, this restriction of the right to leave requires special justification pursuant to article 12 (3) of the Covenant.[51] Limitations on the freedom of movement require a legal basis, have to be compatible with the other rights of the Covenant and be necessary and proportionate to the aim pursued. Prohibiting a person from leaving a country on account of his or her religious beliefs is incompatible with the freedom of religion or belief and the principle of non-discrimination and therefore violates article 12 (3) of the Covenant.[52] The Human Rights Committee has expressed its concern about obstacles in certain States that make it more difficult to leave the country, inter alia in the context of passport applications, and urges States to ensure that all restrictions imposed are in full compliance with article 12 (3) of the Covenant.[53]

3. Restrictions on certain rights of members of particular religious groups

55. Restricting the rights related to citizenship of those belonging to certain religious groups violates the principle of non-discrimination as enshrined in international and regional human rights law (see paras. 34-44 above).

56. With regard to the denial to women of certain rights related to citizenship on the basis of religion, article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women prohibits any discrimination on the basis of sex that limits women's human rights. Furthermore, the right of everyone under article 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to be recognized everywhere as a person before the law implies that the capacity of women to own property, to enter into a contract or to exercise other civil rights may not be restricted on the basis of marital status or any other discriminatory ground.[54]

57. The previous mandate holder, Abdelfattah Amor, has also warned against the occurrence of aggravated discrimination following the adoption by the State of the religion of the majority or of the ethnically dominant minority. He has also noted that the existence of a State religion may not in itself be incompatible with human rights but must not be exploited at the expense of the rights of minorities and the rights linked to citizenship, which imply prohibition of discrimination among citizens on the grounds, inter alia, of considerations relating to religion or belief.[55] Indeed, "to the extent that everything ultimately depends on the goodwill of the State, the personality of those in office at any given moment, and other unpredictable or subjective factors, there is no serious guarantee in law that the

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[50] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 27 (1999), *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/55/40), vol. I, annex VI, sect. A, para. 9; Nowak, op. cit., art. 12, para. 19.

[51] *Samuel Lichtensztejn v. Uruguay*, views of 31 March 1983 (CCPR/C/18/D/77/1980), para. 8.3.

[52] General comment No. 27 (1999), para. 18.

[53] Ibid., para. 17.

[54] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 28 (2000), *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/55/40), vol. I, annex VI, sect. B, para. 19.

[55] A/51/542/Add.1 (on Greece), para. 132; see also E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.2 (on the Islamic Republic of Iran), para. 88; A/51/542/Add.2 (on the Sudan), para. 134.

State will at all times respect minority ethnic and religious rights". (A/CONF.189/PC.1/7, annex, para. 119)

58. Concerning reservations of public posts, the Human Rights Committee stated in paragraph 9 of its general comment No. 22 (1993) that "measures restricting eligibility for government service to members of the predominant religion or giving economic privileges to them or imposing special restrictions on the practice of other faiths, are not in accordance with the prohibition of discrimination based on religion or belief and the guarantee of equal protection under article 26". In addition, the Human Rights Committee noted in the case of *Waldman v. Canada* that the fact that a distinction is enshrined in the Constitution of a State does not render that distinction reasonable and objective.[56]

59. With respect to the obligation to take an oath stating allegiance to a certain religion when one wishes to take up a public post, reference can be made to the above-mentioned provisions relating to the positive and negative freedom of religion or belief, the prohibition of coercion by the State regarding the freedom of religion or belief and the permissible limitations of the manifestation of the freedom of religion or belief.

C. International and regional case law

60. There seem to be only a few pertinent judgements at the international or regional level relating to the above-mentioned citizenship issues and religious discrimination in administrative procedures.

1. Human Rights Committee

61. The Human Rights Committee implied in *Coeriel et al. v. The Netherlands* that a case may fall within the ambit of article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights when a State does not allow a change of family name of a person who claims this is necessary in the context of his or her religion. The complainants in that case, Mr. Coeriel and Mr. Aurik, wished to change their family name to Hindu names after having adopted the Hindu religion. However, the Committee found the complaint inadmissible under article 18 of the Covenant, as "the regulation of surnames and the change thereof was eminently a matter of public order and restrictions were therefore permissible under paragraph 3 of article 18".[57] With regard to privacy, the majority of the Committee members held that in the circumstances of the instant case the refusal of the authors' request was arbitrary within the meaning of article 17 (1) of the Covenant, since the grounds for limiting the authors' rights were not reasonable.[58]

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[56] Human Rights Committee, *Waldman v. Canada*, views of 3 November 1999 (CCPR/C/67/D/694/1996), para. 10.4.

[57] Human Rights Committee, *Coeriel et al. v. The Netherlands*, views of 31 October 1994 (CCPR/C/48/D/453/1991), para. 6.1; the Committee also considered that the Government of the Netherlands "could not be held accountable for restrictions placed upon the exercise of religious offices by religious leaders in another country", i.e. requirements imposed by Indian Hindu leaders.

[58] Ibid., para. 10.5. See also the dissenting individual opinions of Nisuke Ando and Kurt Herndl.

2. European Commission/Court of Human Rights

62. Mr. Aurik and Mr. Coeriel had also submitted a complaint to the European Commission on Human Rights. The Commission declared the complaint under articles 9 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights inadmissible as manifestly ill-founded since the complainants had not established that their religious studies would be impeded by the refusal to modify their surnames.[59]

63. The European Court of Human Rights has also dealt with the wording of oaths for elected members of national legislatures. In the case of *Buscarini and others v. San Marino*, the Court found that freedom of thought, conscience and religion "entails, inter alia, freedom to hold or not to hold religious beliefs and to practise or not to practise a religion".[60] The applicants in this case had been elected to the General Grand Council of the Republic of San Marino whose members have to swear an oath "on the Holy Gospels" before taking office. The Court indicated that the requirement to swear allegiance to a particular religion on pain of forfeiting parliamentary seats would be contrary to the freedom of thought, conscience and religion unless it was prescribed by law, pursued one or more of the legitimate aims set out in article 9 (2) of the European Convention on Human Rights and was necessary in a democratic society. The Court ultimately found that "requiring the applicants to take the oath on the Gospels was tantamount to requiring two elected representatives of the people to swear allegiance to a particular religion, a requirement which is not compatible with article 9 of the Convention. As the Commission rightly stated in its report, it would be contradictory to make the exercise of a mandate intended to represent different views of society within Parliament subject to a prior declaration of commitment to a particular set of beliefs."[61]

64. In *McGuinness v. the United Kingdom*, the European Court of Human Rights further developed its case law on this matter. Martin McGuinness, an elected Member of Parliament of Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland, was required to take an oath of allegiance to the British monarchy[62] before taking his seat in Parliament. He alleged that to take the prescribed oath would offend his religious beliefs as they are enshrined in article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, as he was a Roman Catholic and that under the law of the United Kingdom, Roman Catholics are barred from acceding to the throne. The Court referred to its judgement in *Buscarini and others;* however, in this case it found that since the applicant was not required to swear or affirm allegiance to a particular religion on pain of forfeiting his parliamentary seat or as a condition of taking up his seat, the applicant's complaint under article 9 of the European Convention was manifestly ill-founded.[63]

65. In *Buscarini and others v. San Marino*, the European Court of Human Rights referred to another leading case, *Kokkinakis v. Greece*, where the Court had stated that "[a]s enshrined in Article 9 (art. 9), freedom of thought, conscience and religion

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[59] European Commission on Human Rights, inadmissibility decision of 2 July 1992, application No. 18050/91; see also the reference in CCPR/C/48/D/453/1991, para. 2.4.

[60] European Court of Human Rights, judgement of 18 February 1999, application No. 24645/94, para. 34.

[61] Ibid., para. 39.

[62] "I [name] do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, according to the law. So help me God."

[63] European Court of Human Rights, judgement of 8 June 1999, application No. 39511/98, para. 2.

is one of the foundations of a 'democratic society' within the meaning of the Convention. It is, in its religious dimension, one of the most vital elements that go to make up the identity of believers and their conception of life, but it is also a precious asset for atheists, agnostics, sceptics and the unconcerned. The pluralism indissociable from a democratic society, which has been dearly won over the centuries, depends on it."[64]

3. Inter-American Court of Human Rights

66. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights made only some brief remarks on freedom of religion in the case of *Dilcia Yean and Violeta Bosico v. Dominican Republic*.[65] The Inter-American Court of Human Rights found that, by refusing to issue birth certificates and preventing the applicants, children of Haitian descent born in the Dominican Republic, from enjoying their citizenship rights owing to their ancestors' origin, the State had violated their rights to nationality, to equal protection, to a name and to juridical personality as well as the right to humane treatment. Regarding the claim that the Dominican Republic had also violated the applicants' freedom of conscience and religion under article 12 of the American Convention, however, the Court considered that the facts of the instant case were not adapted to it and consequently did not rule on that aspect.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

67. **The State practice and domestic legislation on citizenship issues and administrative procedures as outlined above (see paras. 25-66 above) shows that Governments sometimes impose restrictions in such a way that the right to freedom of religion or belief of the persons concerned is adversely affected. While the State may have a legitimate interest in limiting some manifestations of the freedom of religion or belief, when applying limitations the State must ensure that certain conditions are fulfilled. Any limitation must be based on the grounds of public safety, order, health, morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, it must respond to a pressing public or social need, it must pursue a legitimate aim and it must be proportionate to that aim.**[66]

68. **In essence, freedom of religion or belief and the legitimate interests of the State will have to be balanced on a case-by-case basis. In addition to the right to freedom of religion or belief, the individual's right to privacy and liberty of movement, his or her right to a nationality as well as the principle of non-discrimination may also be at stake. Keeping in mind this case-by-case approach and the balancing exercise, the Special Rapporteur would like to highlight some aspects that may help to determine whether certain restrictions on the right to freedom of religion or belief are in contravention of human rights law.**

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[64] European Court of Human Rights, judgement of 25 May 1993, application No. 14307/88, para. 31.

[65] Inter-American Court of Human Rights, judgement of 8 September 2005, Series C No. 130, paras. 202-207.

[66] See for example article 18 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation Provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (E/CN.4/1985/4, annex), para. 10.

69. The State cannot impose or interpret limitations in a way that would jeopardize the essence of the right concerned. Consequently, forcing someone who wishes to take up a public post to take an oath swearing his or her allegiance to a certain religion may amount to coercion by the State and would violate the individual's freedom of religion or belief. Similarly inconsistent with article 18 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights would be citizenship policies or practices which restrict access to education, medical care, employment, humanitarian assistance or social benefits in order to compel believers or non-believers to adhere to, recant or change their religious beliefs.

70. Measures that discriminate on the basis of religion or belief, or lead to de facto discrimination on such grounds, violate human rights standards. Consequently, it would be contrary to the principle of non-discrimination to restrict citizenship to people with certain religious beliefs or to deny official documents based on the applicant's religious affiliation. It is also a discriminatory State practice to restrict public posts to members of certain religions or to require candidates to adhere to a particular denomination of the dominant religion in that State. However, the principle of equality may require States to take affirmative action in order to diminish or eliminate conditions which cause or help to perpetuate discrimination. Thus, reserving a certain proportion of seats in legislatures to members of religious minorities might be a case of legitimate differentiation as long as such action is needed to correct discrimination in fact.

71. Measures that limit the freedom of religion or belief must pursue a legitimate aim and be proportionate to the aim. Furthermore, any assessment as to the necessity of a limitation should be based on objective considerations.

72. It would be a legitimate aim were a State to ask for the religious affiliation of its citizens, for example, within the framework of conducting a national census that will allow the State to analyse issues related to freedom of religion or belief. However, the burden of justifying a limitation upon human rights such as freedom of religion or belief or the individual's right to privacy lies with the State.

73. Laws imposing limitations on the exercise of human rights should not be arbitrary or unreasonable. If the State wishes to mention religious affiliation on official documents, various categories of affiliation, including open-ended ones, need to be provided. It is never sufficient to provide as the only possibility a choice from a limited number of officially recognized religions; there should also be the possibility for the individual to indicate "other religion" or "no religion", and the possibility not to divulge his or her religious beliefs at all. In general, any indication of one's religious affiliation should be on a voluntary basis.

74. All limitations should be interpreted in the light and context of the particular right concerned. Taking into account the nature of the positive and negative freedom of religion or belief, applicants for official documents should not be obliged to subscribe to specific statements with regard to their substantive religious beliefs.

75. Governments may argue that they need to be informed of the religious affiliation of their citizens in order to know, for example, under which

(religious) personal law a marriage should be registered. When restricting the freedom of religion or belief, however, a State should use no more restrictive means than are required for the achievement of the purpose of the limitation. A less restrictive means from the individual's perspective could be devised by the State, for example, by providing a civil alternative for the registration of marriages.

76. **As article 12 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights requires that any restrictions on the liberty of movement must be consistent with the other rights recognized in the Covenant, it seems advisable to remove questions in passport or visa application forms concerning the applicant's religious affiliation.**

77. **Indicating a person's religious affiliation on official documents carries a serious risk of abuse or subsequent discrimination based on religion or belief, which has to be weighed against the possible reasons for disclosing the holder's religion.**

78. **Every limitation imposed should be subject to the possibility of challenge to and remedy against its abusive application. Fundamental fairness and the right to appeal must be guaranteed in all citizenship and administrative procedures.**

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United Nations Disarmament Information Programme

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme carried out by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in the priority areas of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons. The Programme will continue to publish print and electronic versions of the newly redesigned two-part *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, which is available on its website (http://disarmament.un.org). The content of the website has grown exponentially and it is being used more and more by Member States, conference participants, non-governmental organizations and the general public alike to access daily updates of documents and statements, including video messages. Web sites for specific meetings and conferences are being further developed. The Office will continue to facilitate the participation of civil society organizations in disarmament-related meetings and conferences and collaborate closely with coalitions of non-governmental organizations that spearhead such participation. The present report also gives details of the many contributions of the Department of Public Information to the dissemination of information on disarmament.

* A/63/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/95, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-third session a report covering the implementation of the activities of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme by the United Nations system during the previous two years and the activities of the Programme contemplated for the following two years. The Programme is administered by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in close collaboration with the Department of Public Information, in particular on information campaigns focused on major disarmament-related events and conferences.

2. The objectives of the Disarmament Information Programme reflect the overall orientation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, guided by the priorities of Member States as enunciated in the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly.

3. On 15 March 2007, the General Assembly adopted resolution 61/257, by which, inter alia, it supported the establishment of an Office for Disarmament Affairs and the appointment of a High Representative as head of the Office. One of the four core functions of the High Representative is advocacy of disarmament and non-proliferation issues with Member States and civil society. The High Representative interacts with the media, think-tank organizations, academia and civil society organizations that play a vital role in building and activating public opinion in respect of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Hence, the overall advocacy role of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in mobilizing political will to overcome the stalemate in disarmament and non-proliferation has been strengthened.

4. In the area of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, especially nuclear weapons, high priority was accorded to the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Vienna, 30 April-11 May 2007 and Geneva, 28 April-9 May 2008), entailing an increased demand for information by the diplomatic community, other international and civil society organizations, the media and the general public.

5. In the field of conventional weapons, priority was accorded to the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held in New York from 14 to 18 July 2008. Again, the Office for Disarmament Affairs was required to mobilize resources to meet the demand for information from various sectors.

6. The importance of the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to grow, as evidenced by the substantial amount of time spent by visitors on the site. Dedicated websites were designed for major disarmament-related conferences, including the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference and the Third Biennial Meeting of States, as well as in connection with issues such as efforts to achieve an arms trade treaty.

7. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 61/73, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report reviewing the results of the implementation of

the recommendations of the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/57/124) and possible new opportunities for promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education, and to submit it to the Assembly at its sixty-third session. A separate report has been issued on this item (A/63/158) and should be read in conjunction with the present report.

8. In a series of resolutions adopted at its sixty-second session, the General Assembly reaffirmed the usefulness of the Office's three regional centres — in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean — in carrying out dissemination and educational programmes. Separate reports to the General Assembly on the three regional centres provide detailed information about their activities (A/63/157, A/63/163 and A/63/178).

9. The United Nations disarmament fellowship training and advisory services continues to be the Office's largest annual training programme. A separate report on its activities has been submitted to the Assembly (A/63/129).

10. In accordance with the standing request of the General Assembly asking the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to report to the Assembly on the activities of the Institute on a yearly basis, accounts of the information and education activities of the Institute for the past two years are contained in separate reports transmitted by the Secretary-General for consideration by the Assembly (see A/62/152 and A/63/XXX).

11. Funding for the Disarmament Information Programme continues to be derived from the regular budget and from extrabudgetary resources, in particular from the Voluntary Trust Fund for the Programme. The status of the Fund as at 31 December 2007 is contained in the annex to the present report. The Fund continued to benefit from the generosity of Member States and private donors. The Office for Disarmament Affairs is grateful for the donations and support it has received from States and private donors, as listed in the annex.

II. Information resources

A. Publication programme

12. *The United Nations Disarmament Yearbook* remains the flagship publication of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The English version of the *Yearbook* is issued in a print run of more than 4,000 copies and distributed worldwide to United Nations libraries, as well as to its depository library system, United Nations information centres, all permanent missions in New York and Geneva (in multiple copies), the offices of the regional commissions and parliamentary libraries. It is sold in United Nations bookshops to subscribers and non-subscribers, with several hundred copies of each edition being sold. A copy is distributed to every delegation participating in the work of the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament. In addition, the *Yearbook* is distributed to approximately 1,300 research institutes, organizations and individuals, mainly in the developing world. The number of institutes receiving it has doubled since the previous reporting period.

13. In order to better meet the needs of users, a change has been made to the format of the *Yearbook*: it is now produced in two parts. Part I replaces the booklet of disarmament resolutions and decisions and contains all the resolutions and

decisions of the previous session of the General Assembly. It will be published yearly, early in spring. Part II addresses the main issues considered at the multilateral level during the year, as well as relevant developments and trends. It will also have a convenient issue-oriented timeline, short summaries of First Committee and General Assembly activity on resolutions and decisions and the full texts of principal multilateral agreements reached during the year and declarations adopted by treaty review conferences. The chart of submissions to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms will also be featured, together with a graph showing regional participation in the Register.

14. The *Yearbook* is also produced in an electronic format which is easily accessible on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The *e-Yearbook* is in both HTML and PDF formats and features full-text search, index search and navigation mechanisms. Electronic versions of the *Yearbook* have been available since 2002.

15. The Programme continued to publish its dark-blue-covered series of studies, in all six official languages of the United Nations. The series, a non-sales publication produced in small quantities, highlights General Assembly studies undertaken by groups of governmental experts, packaging them in an attractive form for wider dissemination and future use. In 2008, study series 32 was released, on the subject of verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification; the report of the First Committee on the agenda item relating to that issue was presented to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session (A/62/390).

16. The occasional papers series was developed to ensure wider dissemination of the expert input from panels and seminars sponsored by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The publication is produced in English only, disseminated free of charge and posted on the Office website. The following three papers, all of which relate to the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), were issued in the period under review:

(a) *Occasional Paper* No. 11, October 2006, "United Nation Seminar on Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1540 in Asia and the Pacific", based on an outreach seminar held in Beijing in July 2006 and attended by 67 participants from 28 countries as well as international organizations;

(b) *Occasional Paper* No. 12, May 2007, "United Nations Seminar on Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1540 in Africa", based on an outreach seminar held in Accra in November 2006 and attended by 50 participants from 21 countries as well as subregional and international organizations;

(c) *Occasional Paper* No. 13, December 2007, "United Nations Seminar on Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1540 in Latin America and the Caribbean", based on a seminar held in Lima in November 2006 and attended by 84 participants from 26 countries as well as regional, subregional and international organizations.

17. In 2007 and 2008, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to produce the e-publication "Disarmament Update", which is aimed at interested members of the public and highlights recent events and activities of the Office and other disarmament forums, linking the reader to fuller material and documents already available on the Office and related websites. Four issues are planned each year.

18. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the Small Arms Survey teamed up late in 2006 to publish a report entitled "Developing a mechanism to prevent illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons: scope and implications". The publication was funded by the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway.

19. In July 2008, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published a booklet entitled "Small arms and light weapons: selected United Nations documents" in advance of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York from 14 to 18 July. The booklet was designed to provide diplomats and other Government officials and regional and subregional bodies, the United Nations system, specialized non-governmental organizations, research institutes, educators, students and the general public with an easy-to-use compendium of key documents, relevant to the subject, including international instruments, and reports and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. An electronic version of the booklet is also available online.

20. Also in July 2008, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published a booklet entitled "Disarmament 2007: critical disarmament issues", covering the proceedings of four panel discussions organized in 2007 by the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security in cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The booklet is part of a series of publications within the framework of the mandate of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme. The booklet covers topics under the following headings: "A verifiable fissile-material treaty as a foundation for nuclear disarmament", "A code of conduct for outer space", "Technical advances and field experiences for use in biological verification" and "Towards a global cleanout of nuclear weapon materials". The transcripts included in the publication are also available online.

B. Website

21. The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to maintain and improve both the substantive content and technical delivery of its website.

22. The overall design of the website remains oriented towards specific issues. The priorities of the Office determine its core content. Its front page provides the latest disarmament-related United Nations press releases and statements of the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials, including the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, as well as publications, information about current and upcoming events in the field of disarmament, relevant background documentation and links to significant United Nations partners. Its substantive pages give background information on the topic being explored and store a wealth of information on major disarmament-related conferences. Documentation in all official languages relating to such conferences is posted on the website. In conjunction with the Department of Public Information, the Office for Disarmament Affairs is working on a new, user-friendly layout and design for its website which should reduce the number of layers in the process of information retrieval. In addition, the new website will comply with guidelines to allow accessibility to users with disabilities, including those who are blind or have limited vision.

23. The Office is continuing to monitor the performance of its website. Monthly statistics are kept relating to the number of hits and visitors, peak hours and the days the website is accessed. Regular monitoring has improved the Office's understanding of the kind of information that is being sought and who is seeking it.

24. The number of visitors to the site has doubled since the previous report of August 2006 (A/61/215), with more than 35,000 unique visitors using the site. The total number of sessions has increased by a factor of 50 per cent. The average time individual users spend on the website has increased by 20 per cent. The top users of the website, measured by the time they spend on the site, are Government agencies (mainly ministries of foreign affairs), educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. The two most visited sections of the site are the database of General Assembly resolutions and decisions on disarmament and the pages on the status and texts of disarmament-related treaties.

25. Expanding the multilingual version of the website continues to be a major challenge. Only when documentation exists in all United Nations official languages is the Office able to post it quickly and easily. It is expected that the new website, which is currently being developed, will have its home page content available in all official United Nations languages.

C. Exhibitions

26. Exhibitions play an important role in promoting advocacy and providing information on a conference or other topics through the promotion of governmental and non-governmental positions. Such exhibitions have become an expected fixture of United Nations conferences.

27. On the margins of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Office for Disarmament Affairs facilitated an exhibition by the Pacific Information Office, a non-governmental organization based in Germany, on the effects of nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific region. In addition, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, which is located in Vienna, mounted an exhibition on its verification regime and technical capabilities, facilitated by the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

28. The Office for Disarmament Affairs facilitated an exhibition by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons at Headquarters to mark the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. The exhibition illustrated the negative effects of the use of chemical warfare agents and the international efforts to ban that class of weapon of mass destruction, highlighting the role and work of the organization. In addition to being displayed in the high-traffic passageway next to the main conference rooms for several weeks, the exhibition also served as the backdrop for a one-day high-level conference held to mark the anniversary, which was attended by the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and attracted considerable media interest.

29. The Office for Disarmament Affairs provided substantive input for an exhibition on small arms and light weapons organized at Headquarters by the Department of Public Information (see para. 44 below).

30. On the margins of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Office for Disarmament Affairs facilitated an exhibition by Soka Gakkai (Buddhist Association for Peace, Culture and Education), a Japan-based non-governmental organization, on transforming the human spirit, which highlighted the dangers associated with nuclear weapons. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs opened the exhibition and made remarks. The Pacific Information Office mounted an exhibition similar to that referred to in paragraph 27 above.

31. On the margins of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Office for Disarmament Affairs facilitated exhibitions by the Regional Centre on Small Arms, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the International Action Network on Small Arms and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on various aspects related to small arms.

32. The permanent disarmament exhibition section of the United Nations guided tour route on the third floor of the General Assembly building continues to attract visitors. The Secretary-General and Pope Benedict XVI viewed the disarmament exhibition during the Pope's visit to the United Nations in April 2008. The features of the map showing the regions of the world that are part of nuclear-weapon-free zones has recently been enhanced and updated to include the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The Office for Disarmament Affairs is working on the production of a magnet and a postcard-size version of the map for general distribution.

III. Information activities

A. Conferences and panel discussions

33. On the margins of the meetings of the First Committee, the Office for Disarmament Affairs sponsored a panel discussion with the Global Security Institute on the topic of the United Nations and security, which was held on 11 October 2006. Panellists discussed furthering United Nations efforts to achieve a more secure and peaceful world.

34. In June 2007, the Office for Disarmament Affairs co-organized a conference on the theme "A firm and lasting peace in Central America: the pending agenda 20 years later" to mark the anniversary of the Esquipulas II Agreement, which defined a number of measures to promote national reconciliation and an end to hostilities in Central America. The President of Costa Rica, Óscar Arias Sánchez, who spearheaded the Nobel Peace Laureates' proposal for an international arms trade treaty, attended the conference. The former President of Guatemala, Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo, a key negotiator of the 1997 accords, also participated in the event. The Secretary-General addressed the conference. The organizers of the conference

included the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, the Albert Schweitzer Institute (Quinnipiac University), the United Nations Development Programme, the Project on Justice in Times of Transition, the Toledo International Centre for Peace, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and the University of Peace (Costa Rica).

35. In conjunction with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Office for Disarmament Affairs held a panel discussion on 15 July 2008 on the issue of children and small arms. The event took advantage of the Third Biennial Meeting of States on small arms to raise awareness of the effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on children in armed conflict and in zones of instability, and to explore solutions through advocacy activities, peace education and international law, with a view protecting the affected children. The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, a peace educator and a small-arms expert participated in the event. The special guest at the event was Emanuel Jal, a musician and former southern Sudanese child soldier, who is currently the spokesman for the Make Poverty History campaign, the Control Arms campaign and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. While at United Nations Headquarters, Mr. Jal held interviews with United Nations Radio and United Nations Television to shed light on the issue.

B. Activities of the Secretary-General's Messenger of Peace

36. Over the past two years, Michael Douglas, a Messenger of Peace since 30 July 1998, has continued to use his celebrity status to attract attention to the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as the impact of illicit small arms proliferation. The Department of Public Information is the lead office for the activities of the Messengers of Peace and acts in cooperation with the substantive office (in this case the Office for Disarmament Affairs) for activities relating to disarmament issues. During the period under review, Mr. Douglas made a number of contributions, including those set out below:

(a) In September 2006, Mr. Douglas participated, together with several other Messengers of Peace, in a full day of activities to commemorate the International Day of Peace, including attendance at the annual Peace Bell ceremony with the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly and an event at which the Messengers interacted with young people at Headquarters and, through satellite, with United Nations missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Kosovo. Short films documenting the impact of conflict on the lives of people in those war-ridden places were shown during the event. Mr. Douglas also had meetings and briefings with senior Secretariat officials. Mr. Douglas participated in similar events for the International Day of Peace in 2007, including a student observance, during which 700 middle and high school students in New York, including young refugees from Peru and the Sudan, were connected via satellite to young people at the United Nations missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon and the Sudan. The Messengers of Peace and students exchanged views on the theme "Peace: a climate of change";

(b) In May 2008, Mr. Douglas conducted radio and television interviews and participated in round-table discussions with policymakers and journalists concerning

disarmament and non-proliferation, parts of which were posted on the Internet. In addition, he held discussions with senior members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America.

C. Briefings

37. At the request of the Public Inquiries Unit of the Department of Public Information, or directly from individual institutions, staff members of the Office for Disarmament Affairs undertook between 35 and 40 briefing engagements per year over the reporting period, representing approximately 80 staff hours dedicated to education and training activities for the benefit of some 1,500 external participants, including (a) student visitors in the framework of university programmes dealing with the United Nations; (b) members of United Nations associations from various countries; (c) foreign ministry trainees; (d) students preparing for the model United Nations exercises; and (e) visiting members of non-governmental organizations (see also para. 55 below).

38. Staff members of the Office for Disarmament Affairs participated in numerous discussions on arms control, disarmament and security issues organized by research or university-related institutes or think tanks throughout the world.

39. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and staff from the Office have participated in interviews with television, radio and print outlets. Attention has also been given to new media, such as Internet broadcasting and video messages.

IV. Cooperation with civil society, especially non-governmental organizations

40. The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to maintain close contact with two major non-governmental organization coalitions, Reaching Critical Will in the nuclear field and the International Action Network on Small Arms in connection with small arms and light weapons, for the purpose of coordinating participation in major conferences. A total of 131 non-governmental organizations were accredited by and participated in the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (66 for the first session and 65 for the second). In the area of small arms, 335 non-governmental organizations were accredited by and participated in the 2008 Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the largest number ever, with an increase of 60 per cent over attendance at the 2006 review conference. Also, for the first time, the number of new non-governmental organizations requesting accreditation surpassed that of already accredited organizations.

41. The Office continued to cooperate with the NGO Committee on Disarmament and the Department of Public Information in facilitating panel discussions covering a range of topical issues in 2006 and 2007 during Disarmament Week. Similar programmes are planned for the next two years.

V. Activities of the Department of Public Information

42. The Department of Public Information continues to help raise public awareness and understanding of the work of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, arms control and related fields, including by promoting the Organization's outputs and outreach activities.

A. Public information campaigns

43. During the reporting period, the Department worked on the development and implementation of a comprehensive communications strategy for the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held in New York from 26 June to 7 July 2006. The Department used various information and communications tools, including press releases, promotional materials, featured radio and television stories and a dedicated website, as well as outreach projects, to call attention to the dangers associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to raise awareness of the progress made by the United Nations and its Member States in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

B. Exhibitions

44. One element of the communications strategy was the mounting at Headquarters of an exhibition on small arms. Developed jointly by the Department of Public Information and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the exhibition was well received. Subsequently, the photographic segment of that popular exhibition travelled to several countries, including India, Kenya, Mexico and South Africa.

C. United Nations information centres, services and offices

45. The Department of Public Information network of 63 United Nations information centres, services and offices carried out various public information activities in the field of disarmament and arms control, comprising media outreach activities, including journalist training and tours, educational outreach efforts through model United Nations programmes, special events, videoconferences, the production and dissemination of information material, including in local languages, and outreach to the general public through seminars, lectures, conferences and exhibitions.

46. Many information centres promoted the 2006 United Nations small arms review conference, in particular by distributing information material, organizing exhibitions and panel discussions and arranging radio and television programmes and broadcasts of public service announcements. In July 2006, the information centres in Moscow and Rio de Janeiro organized a seminar and briefing in connection with the review conference, while the information centre in Pretoria, in collaboration with South African non-governmental organizations and a think tank, organized a panel discussion on disarmament and non-violence. Several information centres, including those in Lusaka, Nairobi and Ouagadougou, facilitated radio and

television programmes. A televised debate on combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms, initiated by the information centre in Ouagadougou, was broadcast on national and private television, with an audience of more than 5 million people.

47. Many United Nations information centres were successful in placing the public service announcement on the illicit trade of small arms, featuring United Nations Messenger of Peace Michael Douglas, on national and cable television. At the initiative of the information centre in Buenos Aires, the public service announcement was aired 1,100 times on 5 cable television stations in Argentina between July and September 2006. A number of information centres translated information material into local languages, including the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels, which translated United Nations Television materials into Italian and provided them to the Italian State-owned broadcasting service RAI and to the satellite television station Planet Earth. The United Nations office in Armenia collaborated with the Ministry of Culture and Youth and the United Nations Association of Armenia in organizing a model United Nations conference focusing on nuclear disarmament.

48. The United Nations Information Service in Vienna provided, in May 2007, media liaison support for the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and included in its lecture programme briefings on disarmament-related issues, including on the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

49. Throughout the reporting period, the information centres highlighted various disarmament-related issues, including the United Nations efforts on mine action and cluster bombs, the Chemical Weapons Convention and commemorations of the victims of the nuclear bomb explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

D. Internet, television and radio

50. The Department has continued to raise global awareness of disarmament issues through its regular coverage of meetings of relevant United Nations bodies and by reporting on the Organization's activities across the full range of its news network and other information outputs. Full television, webcast, photographic, Internet and radio coverage was provided of the two sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the 2006 small arms review conference and other disarmament-related intergovernmental meetings. More than 250 press releases were issued during the period under review. In addition, disarmament-related developments and issues were covered in more than 200 featured stories on the United Nations News Centre, one of the most heavily visited areas on the United Nations website, which also reaches over 50,000 subscribers to its e-mail service (in English and French). News focus web pages on non-proliferation were also produced. Websites in all six official languages were created for the 2006 small arms review conference (www.un.org/events/smallarms2006), as well as for the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery, including by establishing appropriate controls over related materials (www.un.org/sc/1540).

51. As part of its coverage of issues associated with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, United Nations Radio interviewed the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, as well as delegates and experts, in various languages. United Nations Radio carried stories on disarmament throughout the period under review, such as those focusing on a United Nations initiative in Haiti and a conference on small arms in West Africa. The United Nations Television magazine programme, "21st Century", which is carried by a number of major television networks, featured stories about disarmament efforts in the areas of small arms and demining, while the "UN in Action" series similarly presented a number of items on disarmament topics, including a landmine disarmament buffer zone in Cyprus and the work of the laboratories of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

E. Printed materials

52. The Department's *UN Chronicle* produced and disseminated a number of articles on disarmament issues. Comprehensive coverage of the disarmament work of the First Committee was provided for the sixty-first and sixty-second sessions of the General Assembly. The magazine also covered other relevant disarmament themes, including "The Secretary-General's agenda: progress on disarmament required for global security".

F. Civil society and non-governmental organizations

53. In 2007, the Department, in partnership with the Executive Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations Associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information, organized the fifty-ninth annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations, on the theme "Unfinished business: effective partnerships for human security and sustainable development", with the participation of 1,500 non-governmental organization representatives and civil society organizations from 62 countries representing 500 organizations. Several conference workshops dealt with salient disarmament issues, such as how reducing weapons of mass destruction contributes to peacebuilding and human security, and what grass-roots efforts can offer.

54. The briefing of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations on 24 April 2008 discussed the work of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs attended as a guest speaker.

G. Public affairs

55. During the reporting period, the Department organized 36 in-house briefings on disarmament-related issues, which were attended by 938 participants in total (see also para. 37 above). In addition, the film "Blood Diamonds" was screened, and an academic panel discussion was held on the topic, which was also webcast.

VI. Conclusions

56. **During the period under review, the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme continued to focus its activities on information in the field of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, and on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.**

57. **Responding to the higher levels of computer literacy and technological capability among its constituents around the globe, the Disarmament Information Programme is orienting its publications to electronic formats. The two-part *Disarmament Yearbook*, the occasional papers series and "Disarmament Update" are available on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.**

58. **The content of the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs has expanded exponentially, and specialized websites have been developed for major conferences, serving as working tools for participants and vectors of public information. With the assistance of the Department for Public Information, the Office for Disarmament Affairs will continue to improve the website with an entirely new design to provide current and accurate information in a dynamic and easily retrievable format.**

59. **The Department of Public Information has highlighted disarmament and arms control issues of topical interest, especially nuclear weapons and small arms and light weapons, in print, on the Internet and in film, television and radio, using its large network of information centres around the world and its outreach capacity. Its use of the celebrity appeal of the Messenger of Peace in respect of arms control issues continues to be effective.**

60. **The Office for Disarmament Affairs is grateful for the support it has received from Governments for the Voluntary Trust Fund for the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme and appeals for continued support for its work. It would like to express appreciation in particular to Governments and private donors for their financial contributions to the Trust Fund.**

Annex

Status of the Voluntary Trust Fund for the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme

	(United States dollars)
I. Fund balance as at 1 January 2006	318 165
II. Income	
1 January 2006-31 December 2007	
Voluntary contributions*	39 963
Interest income	35 874
Miscellaneous income	23 496
Subtotal	**99 335**
III. Expenditures	
1 January 2006-31 December 2007	79 012
Programme support	10 272
Subtotal	**89 284**
IV. Fund balance as at 31 December 2007	328 216

Source: based on the statement of income and expenditure for the biennium 2006-2007 ending 31 December 2007. During the period 1 January to 30 June 2008, additional contributions of $51,000 were received from Thailand ($1,000) and a private donor ($50,000).

* 2006: Canada ($6,965), Mexico ($10,000), Republic of Korea ($5,000) and Thailand ($1,000); 2007: Home Box Office, Inc. ($1,000), Mexico ($5,000), Republic of Korea ($10,000) and Thailand ($1,000).

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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains an account of the activities undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa to implement its mandate during the period from July 2007 to June 2008.

The activities undertaken during the reporting period reflect the ongoing revitalization of the Centre and the start of its stabilization, aimed at ensuring its effective functioning over the long term. The General Assembly's decision to fund the Centre's operation from the regular budget of the United Nations and to establish three posts marked a turning point for the Centre. The Centre launched new projects that meet both the requirements of States and the expectations of donors, while also continuing with its existing projects in the fields of security sector reform and practical disarmament. It also confirmed the importance of its activities in providing assistance, support and advice to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. At their meetings in Yaoundé and Luanda, the ministers of the 11 Central African countries members of the Committee reiterated the Committee's importance as a forum for consultation and negotiation, referring in particular to the projects under way to draft a legally binding instrument for the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and a code of conduct for armed and security forces in the Central African subregion, known as the "Sao Tome Initiative".

* A/63/150.

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The Secretary-General expresses his appreciation to the States Members of the General Assembly that have supported the revitalization of the Centre and solved the persistent problem of its precarious financial situation by adopting a resolution that provides for both its operating costs and the creation of three posts to be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations. He also thanks donors for their voluntary contributions, without which the Centre would not be able to undertake projects or fulfil its mandate vis-à-vis African States.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/216, by which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the necessary support to the Regional Centre for better achievements and results; to facilitate close cooperation between the Centre and the African Union, in particular in the areas of peace, security and development, and to continue to provide assistance towards stabilizing the financial situation of the Centre; and to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The report covers the period from July 2007 to June 2008. A financial statement on the status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the biennium 2006-2007 is contained in the annex.

II. Functioning of the Centre

3. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa was established in 1986 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/151 G. Located in Lomé, the Centre functions within the framework of the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, which ensures its supervision and acts as the focal point for coordinating the input of the pertinent organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system.

4. During the reporting period, the post of the Director (P-5) continued to be funded through the regular budget of the United Nations. All activities of the Centre, as well as its operating costs in 2007, were funded solely through voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors. Starting in 2008, however, funding for a Political Affairs Officer (P-3) post and two General Service posts will be available from the regular budget of the United Nations, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/216.

5. The Centre implemented its programme of work in the following main areas: peace and security; disarmament and arms control; outreach and information; and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and other entities.

III. Objectives and activities of the Centre

6. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/151 G, the Regional Centre is mandated to provide, upon request, and in cooperation with the African Union, substantive support for initiatives and other efforts of the Member States of the African region towards the realization of measures of peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region, as well as to coordinate the implementation of regional activities in Africa.

7. During the reporting period, the Centre carried out activities in the four areas mentioned in paragraph 5 above.

A. Peace and security

8. During the reporting period, the Centre continued to implement the project entitled "African security sector reform programme: the promotion of civil-military relations in Togo", with funding provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and France. This pilot project aims to improve the relationship between the military and civilians — by promoting better dialogue and building knowledge and capacity among the armed and security forces with regard to the legal framework for their operations — in order to strengthen security and stability in the country.

9. As part of the pilot project, the Centre worked closely with the Togolese Inter-ministerial Commission on Civil-Military Relations, the United Nations country team in Togo and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It organized various retreats for young political leaders and media representatives. As a result, in October 2007, the young political leaders created an association called the "Permanent Observatory of Young Political Leaders for Non-Violence and Peace in Togo", with technical support from the Centre. The Centre also prepared and distributed a practical guide for the security forces on the maintenance of law and order during elections, which was formally presented to the Togolese Government on 21 September 2007, the International Day of Peace. While some copies have already been provided to the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the guide is intended to be published and distributed more widely, for which purpose the Centre is seeking technical and financial support. Lastly, the Centre held a training workshop for the Togolese armed forces on the legal framework for army operations in a democratic context. The opening and closing ceremonies were attended by the Togolese Prime Minister and general officers of the Togolese armed forces. Over 40 senior officers from various branches of the Togolese armed forces took part in the workshop. The General Staff of the Togolese armed forces asked for training to be decentralized and delivered annually so that members of regiments that had been unable to attend the March 2008 workshop could receive locally based training. The Centre is exploring options for replicating the project in other countries and is seeking funding for that purpose.

10. The Centre also continued and completed the project entitled "Capacity-building on practical disarmament and peacebuilding: strengthening grass-roots and civil society organizations", which ran from February 2007 to February 2008 and was funded by Oxfam (Great Britain).

11. In the framework of that project, the Centre created a database of civil society organizations in West Africa that are involved in peacebuilding and efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, their ammunition and other related materials. It also held a subregional workshop in Lomé in November 2007 to provide those organizations with modern tools, techniques and technical skills to enable them to contribute actively and more effectively to the strengthening of peace, security and stability in the subregion. Lastly, the Centre developed and distributed a curriculum and training manual for trainers with the aim of building the capacity of grass-roots and civil society organizations in practical disarmament and peacebuilding in West Africa. Given the success of this project and its substantive contribution to the advancement of efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms, the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP) asked the Centre to organize similar training programmes on a smaller scale, in close

cooperation with the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms. Discussions are also under way on extending and adapting the project for capacity-building on practical disarmament and peacebuilding (see para. 10 above) to other African subregions.

12. In 2007, the Centre was entrusted with the task of serving as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa; in this capacity it organized the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee, held in Yaoundé from 3 to 7 September 2007, and the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting, held in Luanda from 13 to 15 May 2008. The objective of the Committee is to promote peace and security in the subregion through confidence-building measures, including arms limitation and disarmament. It is composed of the following 11 States: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

13. At the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh ministerial meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee, the Centre made presentations on various disarmament issues concerning the subregion. The Committee also considered and made recommendations regarding the political and security situation in Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as making recommendations for the improvement of cross-border relations. Lastly, the implementation status of the two components of the Sao Tome Initiative (the drafting of a subregional legal instrument for the control of small arms and light weapons and of a code of conduct for armed and security forces in the Central African subregion) was discussed. More specifically, the Committee considered the draft code of conduct, prepared and presented by the Centre, and undertook to provide written comments with a view to finalizing and adopting the code at the next ministerial meeting, scheduled to be held in Libreville in September 2008. With regard to the legal instrument, the Standing Advisory Committee noted with satisfaction the presentation of the study commissioned by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), as part of its partnership with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, on the methodology that should be considered in order to develop and adopt the legal instrument and its plan of action. The Committee welcomed the important advances made in developing the instrument and encouraged its secretariat to provide it with a draft text containing elements drawn from relevant legal instruments. Lastly, the Committee resolved to continue to streamline its activities and decided that a working paper on its origins, mandate, achievements and future prospects should be considered at the Libreville ministerial meeting.

B. Disarmament and arms control

Weapons of mass destruction

14. The Centre provided support for the second African seminar on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), held in Gaborone on 27 and 28 November 2007. Organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in cooperation with the Government of Botswana, this workshop received financial support from the Andorran and Norwegian Governments and was attended by participants from 16 African countries that had not taken part in the 2006 Accra

seminar. Representatives of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the World Customs Organization also participated in the event. The workshop gave States the opportunity to share knowledge and lessons learned in order to facilitate effective implementation of Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1673 (2006). Particular attention was also given to requests for assistance from States and to identifying problems associated with implementation of the resolution, including in relation to the first national reports to be submitted by the States.

Small arms and light weapons control

15. As part of the annual observance of Disarmament Week, the Centre organized, in cooperation with Togo's national commission to combat the illicit proliferation of small arms, a ceremony for the destruction of illicit weapons and ammunition on 31 October 2007. The ceremony was followed by a panel discussion for civil society organizations, members of the diplomatic corps, senior officers of Togo's military and security forces and student researchers on the topic "Arms and conflicts in Africa".

16. At the request of ECOWAS, the Centre took part in the consultations held by the ECOWAS Small Arms Unit on the preparation of a plan for the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition, and Other Related Materials, adopted in June 2006. A meeting of experts will be held to review and finalize the plan prior to its actual implementation.

17. The Centre participated as a member in the meetings of the ECOSAP Technical Committee, which considers and approves all project proposals submitted to the Programme by national commissions and civil society organizations. The Centre also provided technical support for the implementation in Togo of a subregional ECOSAP project launched in 2007, which comprises the following elements: raising public awareness of the dangers of small arms and light weapons, building the capacity of national commission members in the areas of arms registration and stockpile security, and conducting a survey on the circulation and impact of small arms and light weapons in Togo.

18. In November 2007 the Centre participated in an expert workshop in Bamako organized by ECOSAP for the purpose of finalizing and approving its advocacy and communication strategy paper for combating small arms in West Africa. On that occasion the Centre shared its experience and expertise in awareness-raising and communication on the problem of small arms in West Africa.

19. The Centre continued to maintain and operate a small arms register for Africa to promote confidence-building measures and transparency in arms transfers between the countries participating in the Small Arms Transparency and Control Regime in Africa project. It began work on expanding the register to include information on small arms and light weapons brokering. The Centre received financial support from the Austrian Government for the implementation of its project "Regulating small arms brokering in Africa". The project, which is currently in the preparatory phase, is intended to promote the regulation of arms brokers in Africa to prevent illegal activity. It will result in the creation and publication of an inventory of arms brokers, the compilation of administrative and legislative

measures relating to brokering activities and the establishment of a database and a regional register of arms brokers in the 10 target countries.

20. The Centre provided logistical and technical support for the organization of two subregional workshops on the International Tracing Instrument for small arms and light weapons. The first workshop, held in Nairobi on 10 and 11 December 2007 and funded by the Governments of Kenya, Norway and the Czech Republic and by the European Union, was for the States of East Africa, the Great Lakes region and southern Africa. The second workshop, held in Lomé on 17 and 18 April 2008 and funded by the Governments of Norway and Japan and by the European Union, was for the States of West and Central Africa. The workshops gave the participants a better understanding of the obligations set out in the Instrument and the procedures for obtaining technical assistance and individual training opportunities for acquiring practical know-how.

21. In addition, the Centre provided technical support for the regional seminars held on 21 and 22 April 2008 and on 24 and 25 April 2008 in Lomé by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in cooperation with the Government of Togo and with funding from the European Union. The seminars were intended to promote universal adherence to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons[1] and its protocols. Participants from West and East African countries attended the first seminar, while participants from countries of the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and southern Africa attended the second seminar. At both seminars, participants gained a better understanding of why it was in States' interest to become parties to the Convention and discussed the obligations set out in the Convention, the challenges of implementing it and assistance opportunities. These workshops also gave the Regional Centre an opportunity to establish a network of national focal points on these issues to follow up on the discussions generated by the presentations.

C. Outreach and information

22. During the period under review the Centre focused its outreach and information efforts on its Internet portal. It also organized a number of activities in Togo.

23. The Centre reconfigured its website (www.unrec.org), particularly in terms of its presentation and structure, which combine impact with flexibility and ease of use. The key component of the new site is a freely accessible database containing various types of information on peace, security and disarmament in Africa. It offers constantly updated information on events and new trends with respect to the problem of disarmament in Africa. Also in this period the Centre set up an electronic newsletter system whereby it regularly e-mails to interested parties information on its activities and on current developments in the areas of peace, security, disarmament and related issues in Africa.

24. The Centre also organized a number of youth forums in Togo with graduate and undergraduate students in order to discuss a range of issues, including the challenges of disarmament in Africa, armed conflict and international human rights law and the problem of child soldiers. The Centre also gave presentations and led

[1] Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

panel discussions in Togo, with the participation of civil society organizations, on how the lawless circulation of small arms adversely affects development in the countries of West Africa.

D. Cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and other entities

25. Within the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and pursuant to the memorandum of understanding concluded in August 2007 by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the ECCAS secretariat, the Centre participated in the review of the feasibility study funded by ECCAS as part of the preparations for drafting a legally binding instrument for small arms and light weapons control in Central Africa.

26. In 2007 the Centre received funding from the Austrian Government for the implementation of its project "Support for ECOWAS in implementing practical disarmament measures in West Africa", of which the preparatory phase began in January 2008. This project is intended to build the operational capacity of the ECOWAS Small Arms Unit and the ECOSAP project. It will include the review and harmonization of national laws on small arms and light weapons in the West African subregion. It will also include a subregional training workshop to build the technical capacity of members of national commissions. Lastly, it will involve the establishment of a database and a subregional register on small arms and light weapons and on peacekeeping operations in which the States members of ECOWAS are participating.

27. In addition, the Centre supported the process of approving the strategic plan of action of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms for 2007-2017. In that connection, the Centre participated in the meeting of strategic partners organized by the Network on 17 and 18 December 2007 in Accra.

28. From 9 to 11 October 2007 the Centre cooperated with the African Security Sector Network and the Centre for Policy Research and Dialogue in organizing an international workshop on an African strategy for security sector reform, held at African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa. At the workshop the Centre shared its expertise in democratic governance of the security sector, which it acquired through the pilot programme it has been carrying out in Togo since February 2007.

IV. Operational situation of the Centre

A. Financial situation

29. During the period under review the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa received voluntary contributions totalling $915,533[2] for the execution of new projects.

30. The Secretary-General is grateful to the Governments of Austria and Turkey and to Oxfam (Great Britain) for their financial contributions and their support for

[2] In 2007 the Trust Fund received contributions from the following donors: Austria ($773,906), Turkey ($20,000) and Oxfam (Great Britain) ($121,627).

the Centre's activities. He also thanks the Government of Togo, the host country. He hopes that the financial support pledged by the Government of Togo at the General Assembly's sixty-first session will be disbursed to the Centre as soon as possible. The annex to this report contains information on the situation of the Trust Fund for the Centre for the period 2006-2007.

31. An amount of $16,600 from the United Nations regular budget was disbursed to the Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2007 to fund upgrades at the Centre to meet health, safety and security standards. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/216, an amount of $42,900 from the United Nations regular budget was disbursed in 2008 to help defray the Centre's operating costs.

32. Despite the decision taken in Khartoum in January 2006 by the Executive Council of the African Union (EX.CL/243 (VIII) Add.7), in which the Council called upon member States to make voluntary contributions to the Centre to maintain its operations, no funds have been received to date.

B. Staffing

33. During the reporting period, owing to the receipt of some funds earmarked for project-related activities, the Centre was able to recruit a number of staff to assist in the execution of those activities. They include four fixed-term staff members and three project coordinators, two associate project coordinators, one information technology assistant and one short-term local consultant. The Centre also continued to benefit from the assistance of interns in research and project-support tasks. In addition, a recruitment process has begun for a Political Affairs Officer (P-3) post and two General Service posts, which will be funded from the United Nations regular budget pursuant to resolution 62/216. Lastly, a recruitment process has begun for an Associate Expert post funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

V. Conclusion

34. During the period under review the Centre undertook new initiatives and projects in the fields of security sector reform and practical disarmament measures for which specific funding had been provided.

35. The Secretary-General is grateful to the General Assembly for its decision to fund the Centre's operating costs and three new posts from the regular budget of the Organization, which will make it possible to implement the recommendations of the Consultative Mechanism for the Reorganization of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. He calls upon all countries in a position to do so, especially the States of the region, to contribute more actively to the Centre's disarmament projects through voluntary contributions. The resulting increase in the Centre's human and operational capacity will enable it to discharge its mandate in full and to respond more effectively to requests for assistance from African States.

Annex

Status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the biennium 2006-2007[a]

	United States dollars
Fund balance, 31 December 2005	273 906
Income, 1 January 2006-31 December 2007	
Voluntary contributions[b]	1 123 990
Funds received under inter-organizational arrangements	224 367
Interest income	59 940
Other income	157 540
Subtotal	**1 839 743**
Expenditures, 1 January 2006-31 December 2007	714 770
Fund balance, 31 December 2007	**1 124 973**

[a] Information based on the statement of income and expenditure for the biennium 2006-2007 ending on 31 December 2007. In the period from 1 January to 30 June 2008, no contributions were received.

[b] 2006: Cameroon ($1,663), France ($100,593) and UNDP in Togo ($86,729).
2007: Austria ($773,906), Cameroon ($3,914), France ($102,287), Turkey ($20,000) and Oxfam (Great Britain) ($259,265).

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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the period under review, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held two ministerial meetings.

At the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh ministerial meetings held in Yaoundé from 3 to 7 September 2007 and Luanda from 13 to 15 May 2008, respectively, the Committee continued its tradition of reviewing, inter alia, the geopolitical and security situation in some States members. Despite significant progress in some countries, the Committee nevertheless noted that the overall security situation in Central Africa remained fragile, because of social tensions, the resurgence of sporadic armed clashes and the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation.

At the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting, the Committee considered cross-border security issues in Central Africa during an extraordinary conference that brought together representatives of States members and of observer institutions and organizations. That initiative allowed States members of the Committee to make recommendations designed to improve cross-border security in Central African countries. At the meeting, the Committee also welcomed the signature, on 18 August 2007, of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs formalizing their cooperation in the implementation of the two components

* A/63/150.

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of the Sao Tome Initiative, namely the drafting of a legally binding instrument on small arms and light weapons control in Central Africa and a code of conduct for armed and security forces in Central Africa.

At the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting, the Committee continued its consideration of the implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative. It reviewed with interest the feasibility study commissioned by ECCAS on the proposed methodology for the drafting of the aforementioned legal instrument and its plan of action. It also entrusted the Committee secretariat with submitting to it a draft text comprising elements drawn from relevant legal instruments and decided that, in accordance with the agreed time frame, the drafting process should last for two years so that its outcome could be reflected in a resolution to be adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. In addition, the Committee welcomed the draft code of conduct for armed and security forces in Central Africa prepared by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. It undertook to transmit to the secretariat, at the earliest opportunity, comments and any other useful inputs so that the code of conduct could be finalized in time for its adoption at the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

The Committee also pursued its efforts to revitalize and streamline its work. In that connection, it asked the secretariat to prepare a paper on the origins, mandate and achievements of the Committee and entrusted Cameroon, in its capacity as ad hoc coordinator, with the preparation of a working paper on the Committee's future prospects; those two documents will be considered together at the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting. The Committee also decided that the financial difficulties affecting the holding of its ministerial meetings would be included on the agenda of the next meeting. Lastly, the Committee reaffirmed its confidence in ECCAS by asking it, within the framework of its partnership with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, to prepare the geopolitical review for the twenty-eighth meeting, as it had done for the twenty-seventh meeting.

In conclusion, the 11 States members of the Committee demonstrated their commitment to strengthening peace and security in the subregion by working together on specific issues. They reaffirmed the importance they attached to the work of the Committee and agreed to take concerted action, with the support of the United Nations and its partners, to implement the decisions taken. To that end, the Committee called on interested States, especially those in a position to do so, to support the implementation of its projects through the United Nations Trust Fund for the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/53, the General Assembly, inter alia, reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further sustainable peace, stability and development in the subregion. It also reaffirmed its support for the programme of work of the Standing Advisory Committee adopted at its organizational meeting held in Yaoundé in July 1992 (see A/47/511).

2. By the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide assistance to the States members of the Committee to ensure the continuation of their efforts and further called upon him to submit to it, at its sixty-third session, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

3. The present report is submitted in response to that request. It covers the activities undertaken by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa from July 2007 to June 2008.

II. Meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee and revitalization of the Committee's working methods

A. Twenty-sixth ministerial meeting of the Committee

4. The twenty-sixth ministerial meeting of the Committee was held in Yaoundé from 3 to 7 September 2007. The following States members participated in the meeting: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad.

5. The following entities participated as observers: the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, ECCAS, the African Union, the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) and the Permanent Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

6. The States members of the Committee considered, inter alia, the following items on the agenda of the meeting:

(a) Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee, particularly Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(b) Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Africa: implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative and implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa;

(c) Institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms in Central Africa;

(d) Cross-border security issues in Central Africa (separate agenda);

(e) Activities of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

7. The review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee revealed sharp contrasts in developments in Central Africa, particularly in the countries covered by the review, during the period between the twenty-fifth and the twenty-sixth meetings.

8. In that context, and with reference to Burundi, the Committee expressed its deep concern about the deteriorating political, military and security situation in the country. It urged the Government of Burundi and Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL), as well as all other political actors in Burundi, to give priority to dialogue, to continue cooperating closely in a spirit of openness in order to find solutions to all outstanding issues and to take, in good faith, all the necessary steps to ensure the full implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement concluded by the Government of Burundi and Palipehutu-FNL.

9. The Committee also called on the countries involved in the Regional Initiative for Peace in Burundi and the facilitation team to take all necessary steps to ensure that Palipehutu-FNL chose the way of peace once and for all. It encouraged the Government of Burundi to redouble its efforts to strengthen the democratic process in Burundi, in particular by pursuing dialogue with the political parties, cooperating with civil society, ensuring respect for the rule of law and human rights, including freedom of expression and the press, and promoting national reconciliation.

10. The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability that prevailed in Cameroon and commended the Cameroonian Government for its efforts to complete the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. It expressed concern, however, at the growing cross-border insecurity in Cameroon and commended the Cameroonian security forces for the successful outcome of their operations, in particular those to stop roadblockers.

11. The Committee also welcomed the stated willingness of the Government and other parties in the Central African Republic to engage in an inclusive political dialogue open to all with a view to finding a solution to the situation obtaining in the country. On the other hand, it expressed serious concern at the continuing precariousness of the security situation and, in particular, at the repeated rebel attacks on towns in northern Central African Republic and the numerous human rights violations resulting from such attacks and from the reprisals carried out by government security forces.

12. The Committee welcomed the decision taken by the United Nations to deploy a multidisciplinary operation along the borders of the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan and, in that connection, expressed support for the new concept of operations presented by the Secretary-General. It likewise welcomed the European Union's decision to establish an operation that would support the United Nations presence in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic.

13. While welcoming the significant positive developments in the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Committee nevertheless expressed deep concern at the deterioration of the military and security situation in

the eastern part of the country, in particular at the armed clashes between the armed forces and rebel groups and the fighting between rival militias in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. The Committee called on the armed groups to turn in their weapons and to participate unconditionally in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation process. It also invited the Government to develop, in collaboration with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), a comprehensive plan to ensure security in the eastern part of the country, inter alia by putting an end to impunity and promoting the holding of the Conference on Peace and Security in North and South Kivu, as initially recommended.

14. Following the adoption, at the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting, of the Sao Tome Initiative (which includes provision for the drafting of a legally binding instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and the drafting of a code of conduct for defence and security forces in Central Africa), the Committee welcomed the signature, on 18 August 2007, of a Memorandum of Understanding between ECCAS and the Office for Disarmament Affairs on its implementation of the Initiative. It also expressed satisfaction with the proposed methodology, which provides for the simultaneous drafting of a legally binding instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and of the related action plan, together with *travaux préparatoires*.

15. The Committee also considered cross-border security issues in Central Africa during an extraordinary conference organized jointly by ECCAS and the Government of Cameroon. That extraordinary conference brought together representatives of States members and of observer institutions and organizations. The conference made recommendations on ways and means of strengthening cross-border security in the Central African subregion.

16. The Committee also welcomed the conclusion, in December 2006, of peace agreements between the Government of Chad and certain major factions of the political-military opposition, as well as the ongoing inter-Chadian dialogue with the political opposition that had been initiated on 8 February 2007 by the presidential majority and its allies and had resulted in the signature, on 13 August 2007, of an agreement on the strengthening of the democratic process in Chad. However, the Committee expressed its deep concern at the continuing precariousness of the military and security situation in the eastern region of Chad including, in particular, the ongoing proliferation of small arms and the development of cross-border banditry.

17. Lastly, as it had done at the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting, the Committee welcomed and expressed its appreciation for the efforts undertaken and the progress made in implementing the early warning mechanism for Central Africa, and the development of the capacities and other conflict prevention and crisis management tools of the ECCAS secretariat.

B. Twenty-seventh ministerial meeting of the Committee

18. The twenty-seventh ministerial meeting of the Committee was held in Luanda from 13 to 15 May 2008. The following States members participated in the meeting: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Congo, the Democratic

Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad.

19. The following entities participated as observers: BONUCA, ECCAS, the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa and OIF.

20. The States members of the Committee considered, inter alia, the following items on the agenda of the meeting:

(a) Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee, particularly Burundi, the Central African Republic, Congo and Chad, along with the report on the Bahr el Gazal joint military exercise;

(b) Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Africa:

(i) Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and disarmament of civilian populations;

(ii) Briefing by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs: implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative; preparations for the 2008 biennial meeting on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; Nairobi workshop on the promotion of the International Tracing Instrument (10-11 December 2007); Gaborone workshop on implementing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa (27-28 November 2007);

(c) Institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms in Central Africa (status of ratification of the protocol on the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa);

(d) Report on the activities of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

21. In accordance with the adopted agenda, the delegations of Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported on the geopolitical and security situation in their respective countries. The Committee also took note of the statement made by the delegation of Cameroon describing the situation in that country.

22. With regard to Burundi, the Committee took note of the formation of a new Government following the reshuffle of 14 November 2007, which allowed for the strict application of article 129 of the Constitution, as demanded by some political parties represented in the National Assembly. It condemned the attacks perpetrated by Palipehutu-FNL against innocent populations in the capital, Bujumbura, in violation of the ceasefire agreement signed on 7 September 2006. The Committee also urged the Government of Burundi, Palipehutu-FNL and all other political actors to give priority to dialogue. It appealed once again to the international community and donors to provide Burundi with all the support necessary to tackle the serious socio-economic and security problems facing the country.

23. The Committee took note with satisfaction of the recent signing in Libreville, on 9 May 2008, of a ceasefire and peace agreement between the Government of the Central African Republic and the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie. The agreement was concluded under the auspices of Mr. El Hadj Omar

Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, in his capacity as Chairman of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community ad hoc committee on Central African issues, and in the presence of Mr. François Lonseny Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic.

24. The Committee again expressed deep concern at the persistent insecurity, caused in particular by the roadblockers active in the north of the country, and at acts of violence against civilians. It also expressed concern at the presence of elements of the Ugandan rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army in the south-east of the Central African Republic and at the use of that part of national territory as a crossing-point to neighbouring countries.

25. The Committee also expressed concern at the deterioration of relations between Chad and the Sudan and called on both countries to re-establish dialogue, which should facilitate African Union joint mediation efforts and the implementation of the Dakar Agreement. It took note of the signing of a non-aggression and peace agreement by the Presidents of Chad and the Sudan on 13 March 2008, under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and expressed satisfaction at the deployment in eastern Chad, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1778 (2007), of a multidimensional force composed of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and a European Union operation mandated to provide security to Sudanese refugee camps and humanitarian workers.

26. The Committee welcomed the signature on 23 January 2008, by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the rebel armed groups, of the Goma act of engagement and of the Amani programme for peace, pacification, stability and development in the provinces of North and South Kivu; it urged all parties to work in good faith towards the prompt implementation of those instruments.

27. It also welcomed the Nairobi joint communiqué signed on 10 November 2007 by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which set out a common approach to ending the threat to peace and stability in both countries and in the Great Lakes region.

28. However, the Committee expressed deep concern at the deteriorating security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the Ituri region, and called on the armed groups to turn in their weapons and participate unconditionally in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation process.

29. The Committee also took note of the information provided by the Cameroonian delegation on the peace and security situation in that country. It welcomed the fact that the measures taken recently by the Cameroonian authorities to improve the population's purchasing power, particularly the reduction of tariffs on essential commodities and the increase in government employees' salaries, had significantly contributed to reducing social tensions.

30. However, the Committee expressed concern at the ongoing criminal activities of roadblockers in some border areas in Cameroon, and called on security forces in that country to pursue their efforts to combat that phenomenon, in concert with neighbouring countries.

31. The twenty-seventh ministerial meeting allowed the Committee to move forward with the implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative. The Committee took note of the presentation of the ECCAS-commissioned study on the proposed methodology for the drafting and adoption of the legal instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and its plan of action. It encouraged its secretariat to provide, at its next meeting, a draft text containing elements drawn from relevant legal instruments. The Committee also took note with interest of the preliminary draft code of conduct for defence and security forces in Central Africa submitted by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. It undertook to transmit its comments to the secretariat along with input designed to finalize the drafting process with a view to adopting the code at the twenty-eighth meeting.

32. Lastly, the Committee welcomed the progress achieved and the measures taken by ECCAS in the areas of mediation, combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, child protection and human trafficking prevention, promotion and protection of human rights, electoral assistance to States members, crisis prevention and resolution, and operational capacity-building for the early warning mechanism for Central Africa. It also took note with interest of the activity report submitted by the Director of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, and welcomed the broader partnership between the Centre and the States of the subregion in the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy in Central Africa and the follow-up to those issues.

C. Revitalization of the Committee's working methods and inputs from the Office for Disarmament Affairs

33. At the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh ministerial meetings, the Committee pursued the process of revitalizing and streamlining its working methods. It took note of improved synergies with ECCAS and other United Nations bodies such as the Security Council.

34. Within the framework of its partnership with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, ECCAS prepared, for the first time, the working paper that served as the basis for the discussion of the geopolitical review at the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting; as a result of that experience, the Committee once again entrusted ECCAS with the task of drafting a similar paper for the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

35. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs contributed to the Committee's work by giving briefings on a number of disarmament-related issues, including the preparations for the July 2008 biennial meeting on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which will focus in particular on illicit brokering, marking, tracing, stockpile management, assistance and cooperation; promotion of the universality of the International Tracing Instrument; promotion of the universality of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its Protocols; and implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa.

36. The Committee took note of the communication prepared by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the Security Council meeting held on 30 April 2008 to consider the first report of the Secretary-General to the Council on issues relating to

small arms and light weapons (S/2008/258) and the 13 recommendations made in the report. It expressed satisfaction with the fact that the Republic of the Congo had informed the Security Council of the project relating to the drafting of a legally binding instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa.

37. With regard to its working methods, the Committee once again commended the Office for Disarmament Affairs for its efforts to revitalize the Committee's work. In particular, it encouraged the Office to hold regular informal consultations with the permanent representatives of States members in New York. Indeed, the Committee takes the view that such informal consultations offer States members the opportunity to become more involved in its work, to develop relevant guidelines in a more efficient manner and to discuss the preparations for upcoming meetings, thereby allowing for more active participation by their national authorities. The Committee also asked the secretariat to prepare a concept paper on the origins, mandate and achievements of the Committee, and appointed Cameroon ad hoc coordinator for the preparation of a working paper on the Committee's future prospects; those two documents will be considered at the Committee's twenty-eighth ministerial meeting. Lastly, the Committee decided to include the question of its financial difficulties on the agenda of that meeting.

III. Administrative and financial matters

38. During the period under review, the General Assembly continued to fund the two ministerial meetings from the regular budget.

39. At the conclusion of the biennium 2007-2008, around US$ 10,000 will remain in the Trust Fund for the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The Office for Disarmament Affairs has briefed the Committee on the financial difficulties it is facing in organizing the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting, which is due to be held in Libreville. The Committee decided to include that issue on the agenda of the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting. In that connection, the Secretary-General reiterates his appeal to Member States and intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations and invites them to contribute to the Trust Fund so that the Committee can pursue its programme of activities.

IV. Conclusions and observations

40. **During the period under review, the two meetings organized by the Committee enabled States members to share information and experiences relating to the efforts undertaken in the areas of crisis management, conflict resolution and the strengthening of peace and security in countries emerging from conflict in Central Africa. The organization by the Committee of an extraordinary conference on cross-border security issues illustrates States members' determination to establish lasting security in the subregion and to make the best use of the opportunities for concerted action offered by the Committee.**

41. **The twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh ministerial meetings also offered States members of the Committee the opportunity to discuss enhancing the**

impact of their work. As part of the efforts to rationalize the Committee's working methods, closer and more regular cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the permanent representatives of States members has allowed States to provide the Committee with clearer policy guidance and to become more involved in both its programme of work and the preparations for ministerial meetings. Similarly, the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding between the ECCAS secretariat and the Office for Disarmament Affairs has contributed to the strengthening of cooperation between the two bodies, particularly as regards the joint implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative and the drafting of the geopolitical review.

42. In conclusion, the 11 States members of the Committee reaffirmed their commitment to using the diplomatic and policy forum offered by the Committee to discuss concerns relating to the subregion and to adopt specific preventive measures and measures to strengthen peace and security. They reaffirmed their willingness to meet twice a year, in accordance with the agreed rotation principle and also to meet, as necessary, to discuss urgent issues or specific questions.

43. The ongoing efforts to revitalize the Committee's work illustrate the relevance and adaptability of the body. The States members are aware of the Committee's importance and are committed to working together, with the support of the United Nations and its partners, to implement the decisions taken. In that connection, the Committee calls on interested States, especially those in a position to do so, to help it to finance the implementation of specific projects through the Trust Fund for the Standing Advisory Committee.